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SIR JOHN CONSTANTINE.<sup>1</sup>

*Memoirs of his adventures at home and abroad, and particularly in the Island of Corsica; beginning with the year 1756; written by his son Prosper Paleologus, otherwise Constantine; and edited by Q.*

CHAPTER XX.

I LEARN OF LIBERTY, AND AM RESTORED TO IT.

A! Fredome is a noble thing:

Fredome mayse man to haif liking.—BARBOUR, *The Bruce*.

Non enim propter gloriam divitias aut honores pugnamus, sed propter libertatem solummodo, quam nemo bonus nisi cum vita amittit.—*Lit. Comit. et Baron. Sootie ad Pap.* A.D. 1320 (quoted by BOSWELL)

Libertas quae sera tamen respexit . . . respexit tamen.—VIRGIL.

When corn ripeth in every steade  
Mury it is in feld and hyde;  
Sinne hit is and shame to chyde.  
Knyghtis wolleth on huntynge ride,  
The deor galopith by wodis side.  
He that can his tyme abyde,  
At his wille him schal betyde.—*Alisaunder*.

MORE than this Marc'antonio would not tell me, though I laid many traps for more during the long weeks my bones were healing. But although he denied me his confidence in this matter, he told me much of this Corsica I had so childishly invaded, and a great deal to make me blush for my random ignorance; of the people, their untiring feud with Genoa, their insufferable wrongs, their succession of heroic leaders. He did not speak of their passion for

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liberty, as a man will not of what is holiest in his love. He had no need. It spoke for itself in the ring of his voice, in the glooms and lights of his eyes, sombre and fierce by turns, as we lay on either side of our wood fire; and I listened, till the embers died down, to the deeds of Jean Paul de Leca, of Giudice della Rocca, of Bel Messer, of Sampiero di Ornano, of the great Gaffori and other chiefs, all famous in their day, each in his turn assassinated by Genoese gold. I heard of Venaco, where the ghost of Bel Messer yet wanders, with the ghosts of his wife and seven children drowned by the Genoese in the little lake of the Seven Bowls. I heard of the twenty-one shepherds of Bastelica who marched down from their mountains, and routed eight hundred Greeks and Genoese of the garrison of Ajaccio; how at length they were intercepted and slain between the river and the marshes—all but one youth, who, stretched among his comrades and feigning death, was taken and led to execution through the streets of the town, carrying six heads, and each a kinsman's. I heard how Gaffori besieged his own house; how the Genoese, having stolen his infant son, exposed the child in the breach to stop the firing; and how Gaffori called to them 'I was a Corsican before I was a father,' and the cannonade went on, yet the child miraculously escaped unhurt. I heard of Sampiero's last fight with his murderers, in the torrent bed under the castle of Giglio; of Maria Gentili of Oletta, who died to save her brother from death. . . . And until now these had not even been names to me! I had adventured to win this kingdom as a man goes out with a gun to shoot partridges. I could not hide my shame of it.

'You have taught me much in these evenings, O Marc'antonio,' said I.

'And you, cavalier, have taught me much.'

'In what way, my friend?'

Marc'antonio looked across the fire with a smile, and held up a carved piece of wood he had been sharpening to a point. In shape it resembled an elephant's tusk, and it formed part of an apparatus to keep a pig from straying, two of these tusks being so fastened above the beast's neck that they caught and hampered him in the undergrowth.

'Eccu!' said Marc'antonio. 'You have taught me to be a swinekeeper, for instance. There is no shame in any calling but what a man brings to it. You have taught me to endure lesser things for the sake of greater, and that is a hard lesson at my age.'

From Marc'antonio I learned not only that this Corsica was a land with its own ambitions, which no stranger might share—a nation small but earnest, in which my presence was merely impertinent and laughable withal—but that the Prince Camillo's chances of becoming its king were only a trifle less derisory than my own. Marc'antonio would not admit this in so many words; but he gave me to understand that Pasquale Paoli had by this time cleared the interior of the Genoese, and was thrusting them little by little from their last grip on the extremities of the island—Calvi and some smaller strongholds in the north, Bonifacio in the south, and a few isolated forts along the littoral; that the people looked up to him and to him only; that the constitution he had invented was working and working well; that his writ ran throughout Corsica, and his laws were enforced, even those which he had aimed at vendetta and cross-vendetta; and that the militia was faithful to him, almost to a man. 'Nor will I deny, cavalier,' he added, 'that he seems to me an honest patriot and a wise one. They say he seeks the Crown, however.'

'Well, and why not?' I demanded. 'If he can unite Corsica and win her freedom, does he not deserve to be her king?'

Marc'antonio shook his head.

'Would your Prince Camillo make a better one?' I urged.

'It is a question of right, cavalier. I love this Paoli for trouncing the Genoese; but for denying the Prince his rights I must hate him, and especially for the grounds of his denial.'

'Tell me those grounds precisely, Marc'antonio.'

But he would not; and somehow I knew that they concerned the Princess. 'Paoli is generous in that he leaves us in peace,' he answered, evading the question; 'and I must hate him all the more for this, because he spares us out of contempt.'

'Yet,' said I, musing, 'that priest must have a card up his sleeve. Rat that he looked, I cannot fancy him sticking to a ship until she foundered.'

Certainly we were left in peace. For any sign that reached to us there, in our cup of the hills, the whole island might have been desolate. The forest and the beasts in it, tame and wild, belonged—so Marc'antonio informed me—to the Colonne; the slopes between us and the sea to the lost great colony of Paomia. No one disturbed us. Week followed week, yet since the Prince had passed with his men no traveller came down the path which ran

between our hut and Nat's grave, over which the undergrowth already was pushing its autumn shoots. Indeed, the path led no whither but to the sea and the forsaken village. Twice a week Marc'antonio would leave me for five or six hours and return with bread, and at whiles with a bag of dried figs or a basket of cheeses and olives for supplement. I learned that he purchased them in a *paese* to the southward beyond the forest, and beyond the ridge of the hills; but he made a mystery of this, and I had to be content with his word that in Corsica folk in the bush need never starve. Also, sometimes I would hear his gun, and he would bring me home five or six brace of blackbirds strung on a wand of osier; and these birds grew plumper and made the better eating as autumn painted the arbutus with scarlet berries.

To me, so long held a prisoner within the hut, this change of season came with a shock upon the never-to-be-sufficiently-blessed day when Marc'antonio, having examined and felt my bones and pronounced them healed, lifted and bore me, as you might carry a child, up the path to the old camp on the ridge. He was proud (good man) as he had a right to be. Surgeons in Corsica there might be none, as he assured me, or none capable of probing an ordinary bullet wound. But in youth he had learnt the art of bone-setting, and practised it upon the sheep which slipped and broke themselves in the gorge of the Taravo; and his care of me was a masterpiece, to be boasted over to his dying day. 'The smallest limp, at the outside!' he promised me; he would not answer entirely for the left leg, that thrice-teasing, thrice-accursed fracture. Another ten days, and we might be sure; he could not allow me to set foot to ground under ten days. But while he carried me he whistled a lively air, and broke off to promise me good shooting before a month was out—shooting of blackbirds, of deer perhaps, perhaps even of a *mufro*. Here the whistling grew *largo espressivo*.

And I? I drew the upland air into my lungs, and the scent of the recovered *macchia* through my nostrils, and inhaled it as a man inhales tobacco-smoke, and could have whooped for joy. Not by one-fifth was the scent so intense as I have since smelt it in spring, when all Corsica breaks into flower; yet intense enough and exhilarating after the dank odours of the valley. But the colours! On a sudden the *macchia* had burst into fruit—carmine berries of the sarsaparilla, upon which a few late flowerets yet drooped, duller berries of the lentisk, olive-like berries of the phylliria, velvet purple berries of the myrtle, and (putting all to



shade) yellow and scarlet fruit of the arbutus, clustering like fairy oranges, here and there so thickly that the whole thicket was afire and aflame, enough to have deceived Moses! God, how good to see it and be alive!

Marc'antonio bore me up through the swimming air and laid me in the shadow of the cave—*her* cave. It was empty as she had left it, and my back pressed the very bed of fern on which she had lain, dry now, after long winnowing by the wind that found its way into every crevice of this mountain summit.

How could I choose but think of her? Thinking of her, how could I choose but weary myself in vain speculation, by a hundred guesses attempting to force my way past the edge of the mystery, the sinister shadow which wrapped her round, and penetrate to the heart of it? I recalled her beauty, childlike yet sullen; her eyes, so forthright at times and transparently innocent, yet at times so swiftly clouded with suspicion, not merely shy, but shy with terror, like the eyes of a wild creature entrapped; her bearing, by turns disdainful and defiant with a guarded shame. This turf, these boulders, had made her bower, these matted creepers her curtain. Here she had lived secure among savage men, each one of them ready to die—so Marc'antonio assured me, and all that I had seen confirmed it—rather than injure a hair of her head or suffer it to be injured. She was a king's daughter. Yet this lad of the Rocca Serras, noble, of the best blood of the island, had turned his own gun upon himself rather than wed with her.

I thought much upon this lad Rocca Serra. Why had he died? Was it for loathing her? But men do not easily loathe such beauty. Was it for love of her? But men do not slay themselves for fortunate love. Had *her* loathing been in some way the secret of his despair? I recalled my words to her, and how she had answered them, turning in the steep track among the pines—'I am your hostage. Do with me what you will.' '*If I could! Ah, if I could!*' I liked to think that the lad had loved her and been disdained; yet I pitied him for being disdained, and half-hated him for having dared to love her. Yes, for certain he had loved her. But, if so, her secret had need be as strange almost as that of Sara, the daughter of Raguel, whom seven husbands married, to perish on the marriage eve—'*for a wicked spirit loveth her, which hurteth nobody but those which come unto her.*'

In dreams I found myself travelling beyond the grave in search of this dead lad, to question him ; and not seldom would awake with these lines running in my head, remembered as old perplexing favourites with my father, though God knows how I took a fancy that they held the clue :

I long to talk with some old lover's ghost  
Who dy'd before the God of Love was born.  
I cannot think that he, who then loved most,  
Sunk so low as to love one which did scorn.  
But since this god produc'd a Destiny,  
And that Vice-Nature Custom lets it be,  
I must love her that loves not me.

O, were we waken'd by this tyranny  
T'ungod this child again, it could not be  
I should love her who loves not me.

Rebel and Atheist too, why murmur I  
As though I felt the worst that love could do ?  
Love may make me leave loving, or might try  
A deeper plague—to make her love me too ;  
Which, since she loves before, I'm loth to see :  
Falsehood is worse than hate : and that must be  
If she whom I love should love me.

Many wild conjectures I made and patiently built upon, which, if I were to write them down here, would merely bemuse the reader or drive him to think me crazy. There on my enchanted mountain summit, ringed about day after day by the silent land, removed from all human company but Marc'antonio's, with no clock but the sun and no calendar but the creeping change of season upon the *macchia*, what wonder if I forgot human probabilities at times in piecing and unpiecing solutions of a riddle which itself cried out against nature ?

Marc'antonio was all the while as matter-of-fact as a good nurse ought to be. He had fashioned me a capital pair of crutches out of boxwood, and no sooner could I creep about on them than he began to discourse, over the campfire, on the hunting excursions we were soon to make together.

' *Piano, piano* ; we will grow strong, and get our hand in by little and little. At first there will be the blackbirds and the foxes——'

' You shoot foxes in Corsica ? ' I asked.

Marc'antonio stared at me. ' And why not, cavalier ? You would not have us run after them and despatch them with the stiletto ! '

I endeavoured to explain to him the craft and mystery of fox-hunting as practised in England. He shook his head over it, greatly bewildered.

'It seems a long ceremony for one little fox,' was his criticism.

'But if we did it with less ritual the foxes would disappear out of the country,' I answered him.

'And why not?'

This naturally led me into a discourse on preserving game and on our English game laws, which, I regret to say, gruelled him utterly.

'A peace of God for foxes and partridges! Why, what do you allow, then, for a *man*?'

I explained that we did not shoot men in England. His jaw dropped.

'Mbè! In the name of the Virgin, whatever do you do with them?'

'We hang them sometimes, and sometimes we fight duels with them.' I expounded in brief the distinction between these processes and their formalities, whereat he remained for a long while in a brown study.

'Well,' he admitted, 'by all accounts you English have achieved liberty; but, *per Bacco*, you do strange things with it!'

'... Blackbirds, to begin with,' he went on, 'and foxes, and a hare, maybe. Then in the next valley there are boars—small, and wild, and fierce, but our great half-tame ones have driven them off this mountain. After them we will extend ourselves and stalk for deer.'

He described the deer to me, and its habits. It was, as I made out, an animal not unlike our red deer, but smaller, and of a duller coat; shy, too, and scarce. He gave me reasons for this. In summer the Corsican shepherds, each armed with a gun, pasture their sheep on the mountains, in winter along the plains and valleys; in either season driving off the poor stag, which in summer is left to range the parched lowlands and in winter the upper snows. Of late years, however, owing to the unsettled state of politics, the shepherds pastured not half the numbers of sheep that Marc'antonio remembered in his youth, and by consequence the deer had multiplied and grown bolder. He could promise me a stag. Nay, he even hoped that owing to these same causes the *mufri* were pushing down by degrees to the seaboard from the inland mountains, which they mostly haunted. Ah, that

was sport for kings! If fortune, one of these fine days, would send us a full-grown *mufrone* now!

But we began upon the blackbirds. I remember yet my first, and how, while I stood trembling a little with that excitement which only a sick man can know who takes up his gun again, Marc'antonio held up the bird and ripped open its crop, filled to bursting with myrtle berries; and the exquisite violet scent they exhaled.

Already I had flung my crutches away, and three weeks later we were after the deer in good earnest. I had lost all account of time; but winter was upon us, with a wealth of laurestinus flower upon the *macchia* and a sense of stillness in the air such as we feel at home on windless sunny mornings in December after a night of frost. We had started before dawn, and crossed the valley by the track leading past our deserted hut and up between the granite pinnacles on which, as the sunset touched them, I had so often gazed. We had followed it up beyond the pines and over a pass leading out among a range of undulating foot-hills, which seemed to waver and lose heart a dozen times before making up their minds to unite and climb, and be a snow-capped mountain. But they mounted to the snows at length, and the snows had driven down the stag which, under Marc'antonio's guidance, I stalked for two hours, and shot before noon-day. We left him in the track, to be recovered as we returned, and very cautiously made our way to the crest of the next ridge. I chose a granite boulder for my mark, gained it, crawled under its lee, and, peering over, had whipped my gun to my shoulder and very nearly pulled the trigger—was, in fact, looking along the sight—when I found that I was aiming at a man; and not only that, but at Billy Priske!

I believe on my faith that thenceforward he owed his life to the shape of his legs—so unlike a deer's.

He was picking his way across the dry bed of a torrent in the dip not fifty yards below us, leaping from slab to slab of outcropping granite as a man crosses a brook by stepping-stones; and upon a slab midway he halted, drew off his hat, extracted a handkerchief, and stood polishing his bald head while he took stock of the climb before him.

'Billy! Billy Priske!'

He tilted his head still higher, towards the ridge and the rock on which I stood against his skyline, frantically waving.

'HOO-ROAR!'

'... And to think, lad,' he panted, ten minutes later, as he stretched himself on the heath beside me—'to think of your mistaking me for a deer!'

'Did I say so, Billy? Then I lied. It was for a *mufro* I took you. Marc'antonio here had as good as promised me one.'

His beaming smile changed on the instant to a look of extreme gravity. 'See you, lad,' he said, 'have you ever come across one of these here wild sheep?'

'Not yet.'

'I thought not. Well, I have; and I advise you not to talk irreligious about 'em.'

'I will talk about nothing,' said I, 'until you tell me how my father is, and of all your adventures.'

'He's well, lad—hearty, and well, and thriving. And he sends you his love, and a paper for your friend here. 'Tis from the Princess; and the upshot is, you're released from your word and free to come back with me.'

Marc'antonio, proud of an opportunity to display his scholarship, broke the seal and read the letter with a magisterial frown, which changed, however, to a pleasant, friendly smile as he handed it across to me.

'Your captivity is at an end, cavalier. You said well, after all, that your patience would win the day.'

'My patience, Marc'antonio? What, then, of yours?'

The tears sprang suddenly to his eyes, good fellow that he was, and now my good friend. I stretched out a hand, and he grasped and held it for a moment between his twain. We used no more words.

'So my father is with the Princess?' I asked, turning on Billy, who stared—and excusably—at this evidence of our emotion.

'No, he isn't,' said Billy; 'leastways, he was with her when I left him, at a place called Olmeta, or something of the sort. But by this time he's gone north again.'

'And why goes he north?'

'Because that's where the Genoese have shut up the lady.'

'Meaning the Queen Emilia?'

Billy nodded.

'And you have travelled the length of Corsica alone to tell me this and take me back with you?'

'No, I didn't. Leastways——' Billy opened his bag of provender, selected a crust, and began to munch it very deliberately. 'There's a saying,' he went on between mouthfuls, 'about some-

body or other axin' more questions in one breath than a wise man can answer in a week; and, likewise, there's another saying that even a bagpipe won't speak till his belly be full. Well, now, as for coming alone, in the first place and in round numbers I didn't; and as for coming to tell you this, partly it was and partly it wasn't; and as for your going back with me, that's for you to choose.'

'Well, then,' said I, humouring him, 'we will take you point by point, in order. To begin with, you did not come alone—*ergo*, you had company. What company?'

'Very poor company, lad, and by name Stephanu. That hatchet-faced Prince Camillo chose him out for a guide to me—' Billy paused, with his mouth open for a bite. 'Why, whatever is the matter?' he asked; for I had turned to translate this to Marc'antonio, and Marc'antonio had started up with a growl and an oath.

'Did Stephanu come willingly?' I asked.

'As I was saying, the Prince chose him for guide to me, and he couldn't have chosen a worse one. If you'll believe me, there wasn't an ounce of comfort in the man from the start; and this morning, having put me in the road so that I couldn't miss it, he turned back and left me—in a desperate hurry, too.'

I glanced at Marc'antonio, who had risen and was striding to and fro upon the ridge with his fists clenched. There was mischief here for a certainty, and Stephanu's behaviour confirmed it. For a moment, however, I forbore to translate further, and resumed my catechising of Billy.

'In the second place you came with my release, and to bring me news, and—with what purpose beside?'

'Why, with a message for the ship, to be sure.'

'The ship?' I stared at him. 'What ship?'

'Why, the *Gauntlet* ketch! You don't tell me,' said Billy, with a glance westward, where, however, the hills intervened and hid the coast from us—'you don't tell me you haven't sighted her! But she's here, lad—she *must* be here! Your father sent home word by her that she was to be back wi' reinforcements by the first day of November; and did you ever in your life know your uncle disappoint him?'

'Marc'antonio,' said I, 'what is this I hear from Billy about a ship?'

Marc'antonio gave a start, and looked from me to Billy in evident confusion.

'Truly, cavalier, there was a ship. . . I spied her there three days ago, at sunset, making for the island.'

'Was she the same ship that first brought us to the island?'

'She was very like,' he answered unwillingly. 'Yes, indeed, cavalier, I have no doubt she was the same ship.'

'And you never told me! Nay, I see now why for these three days we have been hunting to the east of our camp, and always where the coast was hidden—yes, yes, I see now a score of tricks you have played me while I trusted to your better knowledge . . . Marc'antonio,' I said sternly, 'did you indeed believe so ill of me as that at sight of the ship I should forget my *parole*?'

'It was not that, cavalier; believe me, it was not that. I feared——'

'Speak on, man.'

'I feared you might forget our talks together, and, when your release came, forget also that other adventure on which I had hoped to bind you. The Princess——'

'Then your fear, my friend, did me only a little less injustice. You have heard how my father perseveres for a woman's sake; and I am my father's son, I hope. As for the Princess——'

'She is in worse case than ever, cavalier, since they have contrived to get rid of Stephanu.'

'On the contrary, my friend, her case is hopeful at length; since this release sets us free to help her.'

We trudged back to the camp, pausing on the way while Marc'antonio skewered the deer's legs and slung him on a pole between us. As we started afresh Billy observed for the first time that I walked with a limp.

'A broken leg,' said I carelessly; for it would not have done to tell him all the truth.

'Well, well,' said he, content with the explanation, 'accidents will happen to them that travel, and a broken leg, they say, is stronger when well set.'

'If that's so,' said I, 'I've a double excuse to be thankful,' which he did not understand, as I did not mean him to.

Darkness fell on us a little before we reached the camp. From the first I had recognised there could be no chance to-day of visiting the shore and seeking the *Gauntlet* at her anchorage. We were weary, too, and hungry, and nothing remained to do but light the camp fire, cook our supper, and listen to Billy's tale of



his adventures, a good part of which will be found in the following chapter. I ought to say, rather, that Billy and I conversed, while Marc'antonio—for we spoke in English—sat by the fire busy with his own thoughts; and, by his face, they were gloomy ones.

'What puzzles me, Billy,' said I, as we parted for the night, 'is who can be aboard of the ketch. Reinforcements? Why, what reinforcements could my uncle send?'

'The devil a one of me knows, as the Irishman said,' answered Billy cheerfully. 'But sent 'em he has, and, if I know anything of Mr. Gervase, they're good ones.'

I was up before dawn, and the sun rose over the shoulder of our mountain to find me a mile and more on my way down the track which led to the sea. I passed the clearing and the copse where Nat had taken his wound, and the rock, high on my right, where I had stood and spied him running, the *macchia*-filled hollows and dingles, the wood, the village, still desolate, the graveyard where we had first encamped; and so came to the meadow below it, where Mr. Fett had gathered his mushrooms. It was greener than I remembered it, owing to the autumn rains. . . .

I pulled up with a start. At the foot of the meadow, where the stream ran in a curve between it and the woods, stood a man. He held a fishing-rod in his hand, and was stepping back to make a cast; but, at a cry from me, paused and turned slowly about.

'Uncle Gervase!'

'My dear Prosper!' He dropped his rod and advanced, holding out his hands to me. 'Why lad, lad, you have grown to a man in these months!'

'And it really is you, uncle!' I cried again, as yet scarcely believing it, though I clasped him by both hands. 'And what are *you* doing here?'

'Why,' said he quizzically, 'tis a monstrous confession for this time of the year, but I was fishing for trout; and, what is more, I have taken two, with Walton's number two June-fly, lad—Mr. Grylls's variety—the wings, if you remember, made of the black drake's feathers, with a touch of grey horsehair on the shank. I wished to know, first, if a Corsican trout would answer to a Cornish fly, and, next, if they keep the same seasons as in England. They do, Prosper—there or thereabouts. To tell you the truth—though, as they say, an angler may catch a fish, but it takes a fisherman to tell the truth about him—I found them

woundily out of condition, and restored them, as Mr. Grylls would put it, to their native element.'

'You don't tell me that the Vicar is here, too?' I asked, prepared at this time to be surprised at nothing.

'He is not, lad, though I pleaded with him very earnestly to come, being, as you may guess, put to my wits' end by your father's message.'

'But how, then, have you managed?'

'Pretty well, Prosper—pretty well. But come and see for yourself. The *Gauntlet* lies at her old anchorage—or so Captain Pomery tells me—and 'tis but a step down the creek to where my boat is waiting.'

We walked down beside the stream, my uncle, as we went, asking a score of questions about our adventures and about my father and his plans; questions which I was in no state of mind to answer coherently. But this mattered the less since he had no leisure to listen to my answers.

I felt, as I said just now, ready to be surprised at nothing. But in this I was mistaken, as I found when we rounded the corner by the creek's head, and my eyes fell on a boat waiting, a stone's throw from the landing-place, and on the crew that manned her.

'Good Lord!' I cried, and stood at a halt.

They were seven—six rowers and a coxswain—and all robed in russet gowns that reached to their ankles. The Trappist monks!

## CHAPTER XXI.

### OF MY FATHER'S ANABASIS; AND THE DIFFERENT TEMPERaments OF AN ENGLISH GENTLEMAN AND A WILD SHEEP OF CORSICA.

Bright thoughts, clear deeds, constancy, fidelity, bounty, and generous honesty are the gems of noble minds; wherein (to derogate from none) the true heroick English Gentleman hath no peer.—SIR THOMAS BROWNE.

La domesticité n'a eu aucune influence sur le développement intellectuel des moutons que nous avons possédés. . . . Les hommes ne les effrayaient plus; il semblait même que ces animaux eussent acquis plus de confiance dans leur force en apprenant à nous connaître. Sans doute on ne peut point conclure de quelques individus à l'espèce entière; mais on peut assurer sans rien hasarder, que le mouton tient une des dernières places parmi les mammifères quant à l'intelligence.—SAINT-HILAIRE ET CUVIER, *Histoire Naturelle des Mammifères*.

'You will find them very good fighters,' said my uncle. 'The most of them, as I understand from Dom Basilio, were soldiers

at one time or another before they embraced their present calling.'

'But the devil of it is,' said I, 'how you contrived to enlist 'em?'

My uncle stood still and rubbed the back of his head. 'I don't know, Prosper, that I used any arguments. I just put the case to them; through Dom Basilio, you understand.'

'In other words, you made them an eloquent speech.'

'I did nothing of the sort,' he corrected me hastily. 'In the first place because I have never made a speech and couldn't manage one if I tried; and next, because it is against their rules. I just put the case to Dom Basilio. All the credit belongs to him.'

Dom Basilio—for the coxswain of the boat proved to be he and no other—gave me a different account as we pulled toward the *Gauntlet*. Yet it agreed with my uncle's in the main.

'In faith,' said he, 'if there be any credit in what we have done or are about to do, set it down to your uncle. Against goodness so simple no man can strive, though he bind himself by vows. Gratitude may have helped a little; but you can say, and you will not be far out, that for very shame we are here.'

Captain Pomery, who hailed me over the ship's side, proudly invited me to row around and inspect the repairs in her—particularly her new stern-post—before climbing on board. For my part, while congratulating him upon them and upon his despatch, I admired more the faces of Mike Halliday and Roger Wearne, grinning welcome to me over the bulwarks. They, too, called my attention to the repairs; to the new rudder, fitted with chains in case of accident to the helm, to the grain of the new mizzen-mast (a beautiful spar, and without a knot), to the teak hatch-coverings which had replaced those shattered by the explosion. They desired me to marvel at everything; but that they themselves after past perils should be here again and ready, for no more than seamen's pay, to run their heads into perils yet unhand-selled, was to these honest fellows no matter worth considering.

'But whither be we bound, Master Prosper?' demanded Captain Jo. 'For 'tis ill biding for orders after cracking on to be punctual; and tho' I say naught against the anchorage *as* an anchorage, the wind, what with these hills and gullies, is like Mulligan's blanket, always coming and going; and by fits an' starts as the ague took the goose; and likewise backwards and forwards, like Boscastle fair: so that our cables be twisted worse than a pig's tail.'

'As for that,' said I, 'your next rendezvous, I hear, is the island of Giraglia; but, for the whole plan of campaign, you must come and hear it from Billy Priske, who will tell you what my father has done and what he intends.'

Accordingly, after breakfasting aboard, we were landed again and went up the mountain together—my uncle Gervase, Captain Pomery, Dom Basilio and I: and on the slope below the Princess's cave we sat and listened to Billy's story, the Trappist translating it to Marc'antonio, who sat with his gun across his knees and his eyes fastened on my uncle's gentle venerable face.

#### BILLY PRISKE'S STORY OF MY FATHER'S CAMPAIGN.

'As Master Prosper has told you, gentlemen all, we left him sitting alongside poor Mr. Fiennes, and took the path that leads down and across the valley yonder and out again on the north side. There were four of us—my master, myself, and the creatures Fett and Badcock—each man with his gun and good supply of ammunition. Besides this Sir John carried his camp-stool and spy-glass, and in his pocket a map along with his Bible and tobacco-pouch; I the wine and his spare gun; Fett the bag of provisions; and Badcock his flute and a gridiron.'

'Why a gridiron?' asked my uncle.

'The reason he gave, sir, was that it's just these little things that get left behind, on a picnic; which Sir John, when I reported it, pronounced to be a very good reason. "And, as it happens," said he, "'tis the very reason why Mr. Badcock himself goes with us: for my son, when he becomes king, will need a Fool, and I have brought a couple in case of accidents."

'We started then, as Master Prosper will remember, a little before dark; and having lanterns to light the track, and now and then the north star between the tree tops to give us our bearings, we crossed the valley and came out through a kind of pass upon a second slope, a little nor'-west of the spot where I happened yesterday on Master Prosper. By this, Sir John's watch marked ten o'clock, and finding us dead-beat by the roughness of the track, he commanded us to lie down and sleep.

'The next morning, after studying his map, he started afresh, still holding northward in the main but bearing back a little to the left—that is, toward the sea, which before noon we brought in

sight at a place he called La Piana, where (he said) was a fishing village : and so no doubt there was, for we spied a two-three boats moored a little way out from the shore—looking down upon them through a cleft in the rocks. The village itself we did not see, but skirted it upon high ground and came down to the foreshore a short two miles beyond it ; where we found a beach and a spit of rock, and on the spit a tumble-down tower standing, as lonely as a combed louse. Above the beach ran a tolerable coast road, which divided itself into two, after crossing a bridge behind the tower ; the one following the shore, the other striking inland up the devil of a gorge. This inland road we took, for two reasons : the first, that by the map it appeared to cut off a corner of our journey ; the second, because the map showed a village, not three miles up the gorge, where we might get advice.

‘After an hour’s climbing then (for the road twisted uphill along the edge of the torrent) we came to the village, which was called Otta. Now the first thing to happen to us in Otta was that we found it empty—not so much as a dog in the street—but all the inhabitants on the hill above, in a crowd before a mighty great stone : and Badcock would have it that they were gathered together in fear of us. But the true reason turned out to be something quite different. For this stone overhangs the village, which is built on a stiff slope ; and though it has hung there for hundreds of years without moving, the villagers can never be easy that it will not tumble on top of them ; and once a year regularly, and at odd times when the panic takes them, they march up and tie it with ropes. This very thing they were doing as we arrived, and all because some old woman had dreamed of an earthquake. We took notice that in the crowd and in the gang binding the stone there was no man the right side of fifty (barring a cripple or two) ; the reason being, as it turned out, that all their young men had enlisted in the militia.

‘These people made us welcome (and I will say, gentlemen, once for all and in spite of what has happened to Master Prosper here, that there is no such folk as the Corsicans for kindness to strangers), but they told us we were on the wrong road. By following the pass we should find ourselves in forest-tracks which indeed would lead us down to the great plain of the Niolo and across it to Corte, whence a good road ran north to Cape Corso ; but our shorter way was the coast-road, which (they added) we must leave before reaching Calvi—for fear of the Genoese—and take a

southerly one which wound through the mountains to Calenzana. They explained this many times to Sir John, and Sir John explained it to us; and learning that we were English, and therefore friends of liberty, they forced us to drink wine with them—lashins of wine—until just as my head was beginning to feel muzzy, some one called out that we were heroes and must drink the wine of heroes, the pride of Otta, the Invincible St. Cyprien.

‘By this time we were all as sociable together as mice in malt, except that these Corsicans never laughed at all, but stared at us awesome-like even when the creature Fett put one foot on a chair and another on the table and made ’em a long tom-fool speech in English, calling ’em friends Romans and countrymen and asking them to lend him their ears, as though his own weren’t long enough. Then they brought in the Invincible St. Cyprien, and Sir John poured out a glass, and sniffed and tasted it and threw up his head, gazing round on the company and looking every man full in the eyes. I can’t tell you why, gentlemen, but his bearing seemed so noble to me at that moment I felt I could follow him to the death (though of course there wasn’t the leastest need for it, just then). I reached out for the bottle, filled myself a glass, drank it off, and stared around just as defiant. It gave me a very pleasant feeling in the pit of the stomach, and the taste of it didn’t seem calculated to hurt a fly. So I took two more glasses quickly, one after the other; and every one looked at me with their faces very bright all of a sudden—and the room itself grown brighter—and to my astonishment I heard them calling upon me in English for a speech. Whereby, being no public speaker, I excused myself and walked out into the village street, which was bright as day with the moon well over the cliffs on the other side of the gorge, and (to my surprise) crowded with people so that I couldn’t have believed the whole City of London held half the number, let alone a god-forsaken hole like Otta. I stood for a while on the doorstep counting ’em, and the next thing I remember was crossing the street to a low wall overhanging the gorge and leaning upon it and watching the cliffs working up and down like mine-stamps. This struck me as curious, and after thinking it over I made up my mind to climb across and discover the reason.’

‘I fear, Billy,’ said my uncle, ‘that you must have been intoxicated.’

‘—But the worst, sir, was the moon; which was not like any ordinary moon but kept swelling and bursting in showers of the

most beautiful fireworks, so that I said to myself "O for the wings of a dove," I said, "so that I fetch some one to put a stop to this!" And I'd hardly said the words before it was broad day, and me lying in the street with a small crowd about me, very solemn and curious, and my head in the lap of a middle-aged woman that smelt of garlic, but without any pretensions to looks. And she was lifting up her head and singing a song, and the sound of it as melancholy as a gib-cat in a garden of cucumbers. Whereby the whole crowd stood by and stared, without offering to help. Whereby I said to myself "This is a pretty business, and no mistake." Whereby I saw Sir John come forth from the house where the drinking had been, and his face was white but his step steady: and says he, "What have you been doing to this woman?" "Nothing at all," said I; "or, leastways, nothing to warrant this behaviour on her part." "Well," said he, "you may be surprised to hear it, but she maintains that you are betrothed to her." "A man," said I, "may woo where he will, but must wed where his wife is. If this woman be my fate, I'll say no more except that 'tis hard: but as for courting her, I never did so." "You are in a worse case than you guess," said he; "for, to begin with, the lady is a widow; and, secondly, she is marrying you, not for your looks, but for revenge." "Why, what have I done?" said I. "Nothing at all," said he; "but from what I can hear of it, five years ago a man of Evisa, up the valley, stole a goat belonging to this woman's husband; whereupon the husband took a gun and went to Evisa and shot the thief's cousin, mistaking him for the thief; whereupon the thief came down to Otta and shot the honest man one day while he was gathering olives in his orchard. He himself left neither chick nor child; but his kinsmen of the family of Paolantonuccio took up the quarrel, and with so much liveliness that to-day but three of them survive, and these are serving with the militia just now. For the while, therefore, the Widow Paolantonuccio has no one to carry on the custom of the country; nor will have until a husband offers." "For pity's sake, Sir John," said I, "get me out of this! Tell them that if any man has been courting this woman 'tis not I, William Priske, but another in my image." "Why, to be sure!" cried Sir John. "It must have been the Invincible St. Cyprien!"

'So stepping back and seating himself again upon the doorstep, he began to argue with the villagers, the woman standing sullen all the while and holding me by the arm. I could not understand a word, of course, but later on he told me the heads of his discourse.



"I began," he said, "by expounding to them all the doctrine of cross-revenge, or *vendetta trasversa* as they call it; and this I did for two reasons—the first because in an argument nothing succeeds like telling a man something he knows already—the second because it proved to them, and to me, that I wasn't drunk. For the doctrine is a complicated one.

"Next I taught them that the doctrine was damnable, and had been pronounced to be damnable by their beloved leader Pascal Paoli; and that it robbed Corsica of men who should be fighting the Genoese, on which errand we were bound.

"And lastly I proved to them on the authority of several wise philosophers (some of Greece, and others of my own invention) that a man with three glasses of their wine in his belly was a man possessed, and therefore that either nothing had happened, or, if anything had happened, the fellow to blame must be that devil of a warrior the Invincible St. Cyprien.

"Yet (as so often happens) the argument that really persuaded them, as I believe, was one I never used at all: which was, that the woman had money and a parcel of land, and albeit no man could pick up courage to marry her, they did not relish a stranger stepping in and cutting them out."

'Be that as it may, gentlemen, in twenty minutes the crowd had come round to Sir John's way of thinking: and they not only sold us mules at thirty livres apiece—which Sir John knew to be the fair current price—but helped us to truss up Mr. Fett and Mr. Badcock, each on his beast, and walked with us back to the cross-roads, singing hymns about Corsican liberty. Only we left the woman sadly cast down.

'From the cross-roads, where they left us and turned back, our road led through a great forest of pines. Among these pines hung thousands of what seemed to be balls of white cotton, but were the nests of a curious caterpillar; which I only mention because Mr. Fett, recovering himself, picked up one of these caterpillars and slipped it down the nape of Mr. Badcock's neck, whereby the poor man was made uncomfortable all that day and the next: for the hairs of the insect turned out to be full of poison. In the end we were forced to strip him and use the gridiron upon him for a currycomb; so it came in handy after all.

'On the second day, having crossed a river and come to a village which, if I remember, was called Manso, we bore away southward among the most horrible mountains. Among these we wandered

four days, relying always on Sir John's map: but I reckon the man who made it must have drawn the track out of his own head and trusted that no person would ever be fool enough to go there. Hows'ever, the weather keeping mild, we won through the passes with no more damage than the loss of Mr. Fett's mule (which tumbled over a precipice on the third day), and a sore on Mr. Fett's heel brought about by his having to walk the rest of the way into Calenzana.

'Now at Calenzana, a neat town, we found ourselves nearly in sight of Calvi and plumb in sight of the Genoese outposts that were planted a bare gunshot from the house where we lodged, on the road leading northward to Calvi gate. To the south, as we heard—though we never saw them—lay a regiment of Paoli's militia; and between the two forces Calenzana stood as a sort of no-man's-land, albeit the Genoese claimed what they called a "supervision" over it. In fact they never entered it, mistrusting its defences, and also the temper of its inhabitants, who were likely enough to rise at their backs if the patriots gave an assault.

'They contented themselves, then, with advancing their outposts to a bend on the Calvi road not fifty yards from our lodging, which happened to be the last house in the suburbs; and from his window, during the two days we waited for Mr. Fett's sore to heal, Sir John would watch the guard being relieved, and sometimes pick up his gun and take long aim at the sentry, but lay it down with a sort of sigh: for though the sight of a Genoese was poison to him, he reckoned outpost-shooting as next door to shooting a fox.

'Our hosts, I should tell you, were an old soldier and his wife. The man, by his own account, followed the trade of a bird-stuffer; which was just an excuse for laziness, for no soul ever entered his shop but to hear him talk of his campaigning under Gaffori and under the great Pascal Paoli's father, Hyacinth Paoli. This he would do at great length, and, for the rest, lived on his wife, who was a well-educated woman and kept a school for small children when they chose to come, which again was not often.

'This Antonio, as we called him, kept in his shop and in a pen behind it a young ram, which was his pet and the pride of Calenzana: for, to begin with, it was a wild ram; and in addition to this it was tame; and, to cap all, it wasn't a bit like a ram. And yet it was a wild ram—a wild Corsican ram.

'Being an active sort of man in his way, though well over fifty, and given to wandering on the mountains above Calenzana, he had

come one day upon a wild sheep with a lamb running at her heels. He let fly a shot (for your Corsican, Master Prosper, always carries a gun) and ran forward. The mother made off, but the lamb, scared out of its wits, sat and squatted like a hare; and so Antonio took him up and carried him home.

'By the time we came to Calenzana the brute had grown to full size, with horns almost two feet long. As we should reckon, they were twisted the wrong way for a ram's, and for fleece he had a coat like a Gossmoor pony's, brown and hairy. But a ram he was; and, the first night, when Mr. Badcock obliged us with a solo on the flute, he came forward and stared at him for a time and then butted him in the stomach.

'We had to carry the poor man to bed. We slept, all four of us, in a loft, which could only be reached by a ladder; and a ram, as you know, can't climb a ladder. It's out of nature. Yet the brute tried its best, having taken such a fancy to Badcock, and wouldn't be denied till his master beat him out of doors with a fire-shovel and penned him up for the night.

'The next morning, being loosed, he came in to breakfast with the family—as his custom was—and butted a crock of milk all over the kitchen hearth, but otherwise bore himself like a repentant sinner; the only difference being that from breakfast onward he turned away from his master and took to following Mr. Fett, who didn't like the attention at all. Badcock kept to his bed; and Mr. Fett too, who could only manage to limp a little, climbed up to the loft soon after midday and lay down for a rest.

'Sir John and I, left alone downstairs, took what we called a siesta, each in his chair and Sir John's chair by the shaded window. For my part, I was glad enough of forty winks, and could have enlisted among the Seven Sleepers after those cruel four days in the mountains. So, with Sir John's permission, I dozed off; and sat up, by and by—awake all of a sudden at the sound of my master's stirring—to see him at the window with his gun half-lifted to his shoulder, and away up the road a squad of Genoese soldiers marching down to relieve guard.

'With that there came a yell from the loft overhead. I sprang up, rubbing my eyes, and, between rubbing 'em, saw Sir John lower his gun and stand back a pace. The next instant—*thud*, *thud*!—over the eaves upon the roadway dropped Fett and Badcock, and picked themselves up as if to burst in through the window. No good! A second later that ram was on top of them.

'How he had contrived to climb up the ladder and butt the pair over the roof, there's no telling. But there he was; and gathering up his legs from the fall as quick as lightning he headed them off from the house and up the road. There was no violence. So far as one could tell from the clouds of dust, he never hurt 'em once, but through the dust we could see the Genoese staring as he nursed the pair up the road straight into their arms. The queer part of it,' wound up Billy reflectively, 'was that, after the first moment, Sir John had never the chance of a shot. You may doubt me, gentlemen, but Sir John is a shot in a thousand, and, what with the dust and the confusion, there was never a chance without risk to human life. The Genoese giving back, in less than half a minute the road was clear.'

'But what happened?' asked my uncle.

'Well, sir, this here Corsica being an island, it follows that they must have stopped somewhere. But where, there's no telling.'

'You never saw them again.'

'Never,' said Billy solemnly; and, having asked and received permission to light his pipe, resumed the tale.

'—There being now no reason to loiter in Calenzana, we left the town next morning and rode along the hill tracks to Muro, when again we struck a high road running northward to the coast. Sir John had sold Mr. Badcock's mule to our good hosts in Calenzana, and here in Muro he parted with our pair also, deeming it safer to travel the next stage on foot; since by all accounts we were about to skirt the Genoese cantonments scattered to the east of Calvi; and although the Corsicans held and patrolled the road, over which a train of waggons travelled daily with material for the new town a-building on the seashore, at Isola Rossa, yet there was risk that a couple of riders faring along it without an escort might be snapped up by the enemy. Also Sir John had no mind to be stopped a dozen times and questioned by the Corsican patrols. We kept therefore along the hills to the east of the road; and on our way, having halted and slept a night in an olive orchard about five miles from the coast, we woke up a little after daylight to the sound of heavy guns firing.

'The meaning of this was made plain to us as we fetched our way round to the eastward and came out at length upon the face of a steep hill that broke away in steep cliffs to the very foreshore. There, below us, lay a neat deep-water roadstead covered to west-

ward by a small island with a tower on it and a battery. The shore ran out towards the island and the two had been joined by a mole, or the makings of one, about thirty yards long; and well back in the bight of the shore, where it curved towards us, was a half-built town, all of new stone, with scaffoldings standing everywhere, yet not a soul at work on 'em. Out in the roadstead five small gunboats were tacking and blazing away, two at the mole and three at the town itself; and the town and the island blazing and banging back at the gunboats. We could not see the town battery, but the island one mounted three guns, and Sir John's spy-glass showed the people there running from one to another like emmets.

'Sir John studied the boats and the town through his glass for five minutes, and after them the inshore water and the beach on our side of the town, that was of white sand with black rocks here and there and ran down pretty steep as it neared the foot of our hill. "If those fellows had any sense—" he began to say, and with that, as if struck by a sudden thought, he looked close around him, and then at the edge of the cliff where it broke away below us; and the next moment he was down on his stomach and crawling to the brink for a look below. I did the same, of course; and overtook him just as he drew back his head, and gave a sort of whistle, looking me in the face—as well he might: for right beneath us lay a sixth gunboat and the crew of her ashore already with a six-pounder and hoisting it by a tackle to a slab of rock about fifty feet above the water's edge. A neater spot they couldn't have chosen, for it stood at an angle the town battery couldn't answer to (which was plain, from its sending no shot in this direction) and yet it raked the whole town front as easy as ninepins.

'To make things a bit fairer, these Genoese gentry offered us as simple pretty a target as any man could wish for; nothing to do but fire down on 'em at forty yards, bob back and reload, with ne'er a chance of their climbing up to do us a mischief or even to count how many we were. I touched Sir John's elbow and tapped my gun-stock, and for the moment he seemed to think well of it. "Cut the tackle first," said he, lifting his gun. "'Twill be as good as hamstringing 'em": and for him the shot would have been child's play. But after a second or two he lowered his piece and drew back. "Damme," said he, "I'm losing my wits. Let 'em do their work first, and we'll get gun and all. If only"—and here he looked nervous-like over his shoulder up the hill—"those fellows from the town don't hurry hither and spoil sport!"

‘I couldn’t see his face, but I could feel that he was chuckling as the fellows below us swung up the gun and fixed it in position and handed up the round shot. But when they followed up with two kegs of powder and dumped ’em on to the platform, my dear master’s hand went up and he rubbed the back of his head in pure delight. After that—as I thought, for nothing but frolic—he even let ’em load and train the gun for us, and only lifted his musket when the gunner—a dark-faced fellow with a red cap on his head—was act’lly walking up with the match alight in his linstock.

“‘I don’t want to hurt that man afore ’tis necessary,” says Sir John; and with that he takes aim and lets fly, and shears the linstock clean in two, right in the fellow’s hand. I saw the end of it—match and all—fly half way across the platform, and popped back my head as the dozen Genoese there turned their faces up at us. The pity was, we hadn’t time for a look at ’em!

‘Sir John had warned me to hold my fire. But neither he nor I were prepared for what happened next. For first one of them let out a yell, and right on top of it half a dozen were screaming “*Imboscata! imboscata!*”—and with that we heard a rush of feet and, looking over, saw the last two or three scrambling for dear life off the edge of the platform and down the rocks to their boat.

“‘Quick, Billy—quick! Damme, but we’ll risk it!” cried Sir John, snatching up his spare gun. “If we make a mess of it,” says he, “plug a bullet into one of the powder kegs! Understand?” says he.

“‘Sakes alive, master,” says I. “You bain’t a-going to clamber down that gizzy-dizzy place sure ’nuff!”

“‘Why, o’ course I be,” says he, and already he had his legs over and was lowering himself. “Turn on your back, stick out your heels and hold your gun wide of you, so,” says he; “and you’ll come to no harm.”

‘Well, as it happened, I didn’t. Not for a hundred pound would I go down that cliff again in cold blood, and my stomach turns wambly in bed o’ nights when I dream of it. But down it I went on the flat of my back with my heels out, as Sir John recommended, and with my eyes shut, about which he’d said nothing. I felt my jacket go rip from tail to collar—you can see the rent in it for yourselves—and my shirt likewise, and what happened to the seat of my breeches ’twould be a scandal to mention. But in two shakes or less we were at the bottom of the cliff together safe and sound, and not a moment too soon, neither: for as I picked myself

up I saw Sir John stagger across and catch up the burning fuse that lay close alongside one of the powder kegs. Whereby, although the danger was no sooner seen than over, I pretty near turned sick on the spot.

‘But Sir John gave me no time. “Hooray!” he sings out. “Help me to slew this blessed gun round, and we’ll sink boat and all for ’em unless she slips her moorings quick!”

‘Well, sir, that was the masterpiece. We heaved and strained, and inside of two minutes we had it trained upon the gunboat. The men that had quitted the platform were down by the shore before this; and a dozen had pushed their boat off and sat in her, some pulling, others backing, and all jabbering and disputing whether to return and take off the five or six that stood in a huddle by the water’s edge and were crying out not to be left behind. And meantime on the gunboat some were shouting to ’em not to be a pack of cowards—for the crew on board could see us on the platform (which the others couldn’t) and that we were only two—and others were running to cut her cable, seeing the gun trained on ’em and not staying to think that the wind was light and the current setting straight onshore. And in the midst of this Sir John finds a fresh fuse, and lights it from the old one, and bang! says we.

‘It took her plump in the stern-works, knocking her wheel and taffrail to flinders and ripping out a fair six feet of her larboard bulwarks. This much I saw while the smoke cleared; but Sir John was already calling for the reload. The Genoese by good luck had left a rammer; and the pair of us had charged her and were pushing home shot number two as merry as crickets, when we heard a horn blown on the hill above us, and at the same instant spied a body of Corsicans on the beach below, marching towards us from the town.

‘Well, Sir John decided that we might just as well have a second shot at the boat while our hand was in; and so we did, but trained it too high in our excitement and did no damage beyond knocking a hole in her mainsail. And our ears hadn’t lost the noise of it before a man put his head over the cliff above and spoke to us very politely in Corsican.

‘He seemed to be asking the way down; for Sir John pointed to the way we had come. Whereby he laughed and shook his head. And a dozen others that had gathered beside him looked down too and laughed and waved their hands to us. By and by they went off, still waving, to look for a better way down: but they took a good twenty minutes to reach us, and before this the gunboat had



drifted close upon the rocks and no hope for it but to surrender to the party marching along the beach and now close at hand.

'Well, sirs, the upshot was that this party, which had marched out for a forlorn hope, took the gunboat and her crew as easily as a man gathers mushrooms. And the rest of the boats, dispirited belike, sheered off after another hour's banging and left the roadstead in peace. But while this was happening the party on the cliffs had worked their way down to our rock by a sheep-track on the western side, and the first man to salute us was the man who had first spoken us from the top of the cliff: and this, let me tell you, was no less a person than the General himself.'

'The General?' exclaimed my uncle.

'The General Paoli, sir: a fresh-complexioned man and fairer-skinned than any Corsican we had met on our travels; tall, too, and upstanding; dressed in green and gold with black spatter-dashes and looking at one with an eye like a hawk's. Compliments fly when gentlemen meet. Though as yet I didn't know him from Adam, 'twas easy to mark him for a person of quality by the way he lifted his hat and bowed. Sir John bowed back, though more stiffly; and the more compliments the General paid him, the stiffer he grew and the shorter his answers, till by and by he said in English "I think you know a little of my language, sir: enough, at any rate, to take my meaning?"'

'The General bowed again at this, still keeping his smile. "You do not wish my men to overhear? Yes, yes, I speak the English—a very little—and can understand it, if you will be so good as to speak slowly."

"Very well then, sir," said Sir John; "if I and my men here have been of some small service to you to-day I count myself happy to have obliged so noble a patriot as Signor Pascal Paoli." And here they both bowed again. "But I must warn you, sir, that my service here is due only to the Queen Emilia, whom you also should serve, and whom I am sworn to seek and save. The Genoese have shut her, I believe, in Nonza, in Cape Corso."

'The General frowned a bit at this, but in a moment smiled at him in an open way that was honest too, as any one could see. "I have later news of the Queen Emilia," said he; "which is that the Genoese have removed her to the island of Giraglia off Cape Corso. I fear, sir, you will not lightly reach her."

"I will reach her or die," said Sir John stoutly.

'The General glanced at the Genoese gunboats. "At present

it is hopeless," said he ; " but I tell you frankly that in two months I hope to clear the sea of those gentry yonder. Meantime, if you are determined to press on to Cape Corso, I'll beg you to accept a pass from me which will save trouble if you fall in, as you will, with my militia. You who have done me so generous a service to-day will not refuse so cheap a token of gratitude."

'Those were the General's words, sirs, as I heard them and got them by heart. And Sir John took the pass from him scribbled there and then on the fly-leaf of the General's pocket Bible—and put it carefully between the leaves of his own : and so, having led us back along the track by which he and his men had come, the General pointed out our way to us and bade us farewell in the Lord's name. He saw that my master wanted no thanks, and a gentleman (as they say) would rather be unmannerly than troublesome.

'That, sirs, is all my story, except that by the help of the General's pass we made our way up the long length of Cape Corso : and at first Sir John, learning there were yet some Genoese left in a valley they call Luri, pitched his camp at the head of it, and day by day took out his camp-stool and stalked the mountains till little by little he cleared the valley, driving the enemy down to the *marina* in terror of his sharp-shooting. After that we lodged for a while in a tower on the top of a crag, where (the country people said) a famous old Roman had once lived out his exile. Last of all we moved to the shore opposite the island of Giraglia ; but the Genoese had burnt the village which formerly stood there. Among the ruins we camped, and day after day my master conned the island across the strait, waiting for the time when the *Gauntlet* should be due. A tower stands in the island, which is but a cliff of bare rock, and there must be deep water close inshore, for once a Genoese vessel drew alongside and landed stores : but, for the rest, day after day, my master could see through his glass no sign of life but a sentry or two on the platform above the landing-quay.

'At last there came a day when, from a goatherd who brought us meat and wine from the next *paese*, we learned that a body of armed men, Corsicans, had pushed up to Olmeta, near by Nonza, to press the Genoese garrison there. Sir John, sick of waiting idle, proposed that we should travel back and help them, if only to fill up the time. It would be on our way, at any rate, to send word to the ketch, which was near about due. So we travelled back to Olmeta ; and behold, we tumbled upon the Princess and her men who had first taken us prisoners ; and the Princess's brother with

her—and be dashed if I like his looks ! So Sir John told his tale, and the Princess sent me along with Master Prosper's letter of release. And here's a funny thing now !' wound up Billy, glancing at me. 'The Prince was willing enough your release should be sent, and even chose out that fellow Stephanu to come along with me. But something in his eye—I can't azackly describe it—warned me he had a sort of reason for thinking that 'twouldn't do you much good. There was a priest, too : I took a notion that *he* didn't much expect to see you again, sir. And this kept me in a sweat every mile of the journey, so that when you pointed your gun at me yesterday, as natural as life, you might have knocked me down with a feather.'

'Then it is settled,' decided my uncle as Billy came to a full stop. 'Sir John has gone north again, you say, and will be expecting us off the island ? There's naught to prevent our starting this evening ?'

'Nothing at all,' agreed Captain Pomery, to whom by a glance he had appealed. 'Leastways and supposing I can get my hawsters out of curl-papers.'

'That suits you, Prosper ?' asked my uncle.

I looked across the fire at Marc'antonio, who sat with his eyes lowered upon the gun across his knees.

'Marc'antonio,' said I, 'my friends here are proposing to sail northward to Cape Corso to-night. They require me to sail with them. Am I free, think you ?'

'Beyond doubt you are free, cavalier,' answered Marc'antonio, still without lifting his eyes.

'Now for my part,' I said, 'I am not so sure. Suppose—look at me please, my friend—suppose that you and I were to go first to the Princess together and ask her leave ?'

My uncle gazed up at Marc'antonio, who had sprung to his feet ; and—after a long look at his face—from Marc'antonio to me.

'Prosper,' he said quietly, 'we shall sail to-night. If we sail without you, will your father forgive us ? That is all I ask.'

'Dear uncle,' said I, 'for the life of me I cannot tell you ; but that in my place he would do the like, I am sure.'

*(To be continued.)*

# *A NEW TALE OF TWO CITIES.*

BY LAURENCE GOMME, F.S.A.

SOMETHING has happened. It is perhaps too early to gauge the full extent and force of the new position, but it is the proper time to note that just as it is being, or has been, discovered that the future centres of man's social and cultured life lie in the cities, the governing authorities of two great cities, and those two cities no other than London and Paris, have been exchanging visits, and have produced therefrom a sort of inter-municipal conception of things which has hitherto not found a place among the dominant forces of modern civilisation. It is not too much to say that the juxtaposition of theory and practice thus brought about is a remarkable fact which cannot be ignored. Communities of men are governed, as individuals are governed, by all sorts of influences which, working silently and unseen, produce results which are observable for the most part only when they have passed into history and have been subjected to the analysis of scientific inquiry. But the obvious significance of the present position is not a matter of history; it is part of the work of the present day. And the two cities have now a tale to tell, which it is worth while attending to, even while it is new. It is not mere accident that this psychological moment stands revealed so plainly. It is not mere accident that men engaged in the practical affairs of life find themselves for the moment standing aside, and discovering for themselves that at the back of municipal interchange of thought lies a whole realm of usefulness which has hitherto not been opened up to modern municipal ideas. It was partly recognised by the ancient Greek and Roman municipalities; it was faintly recognised by mediæval cities and towns. But if it becomes a concept of the modern system of governance, it is destined to assume far larger proportions than was possible to the older municipalities. At the most, the older idea of municipal inter-relationship was strictly limited. The leagues of the Greek cities were limited not only in geography, but in duration. The affiliation of the daughter cities of ancient Rome was marred by the aggrandising policy of the mother city. The

confederacy of the burghs of Scotland, the five Danish burghs of England, and the mediæval league of the Cinque Ports are but partial exemplifications of the same tendency. London and Paris, however, have together begun a new phase. They have discovered in the idiosyncrasies of each other food for reflection and study, while in the common ground occupied by both cities they have found an extension of municipal possibilities, whose area and rate of development are scarcely measurable—in a word, they have discovered that municipal problems have to do with people's needs and rights, with some of the most important phases of modern civilisation, and that these may, nay must, be considered apart from the boundaries of nations, and apart from the conflict of national interests. Such a discovery does not rest even at this important stage, for it is obvious that the breakdown of international ignorance and jealousy must follow the establishment of inter-municipal aims and successes, and that in this way the surest path to the peace of civilised humanity has been laid down.

One cannot, of course, say what were the precise events or moments during the ceremonies which took place in either city which best represent this new idea. In London, we think it must have been present when the King met the municipal representatives of his own great capital city and their guests, the municipal representatives of Paris, on the occasion of the opening of Aldwych and Kingsway. King and people on common ground celebrating the completion of a great municipal undertaking, opening out new methods of dealing with the problem of replanning London to meet modern requirements—the occasion was a great one, and both King and people recognised it as such. And it must have flashed across the minds of the municipal administrators taking part in this ceremony that they were not only bidding farewell to much that had become obsolete in our methods, but welcoming something which was new. They probably did not formulate their thoughts. But they were brought sharp up against a wholly different experience which must have produced, by the very clash of events, the first recognition of the new state of things. For in direct contrast to the ceremonial function at Aldwych, revealing splendour and wealth, was that other memorable function, the drive to the East End of London, where those who governed London were bent upon showing their visitors some of the grim realities of life which it is their mission to ameliorate on behalf of the helpless and the unfortunate. They showed them, however,

much more than this; for on that occasion was realised the inner gentleness of the Englishman's character, when, without word or order, thousands of workpeople and thousands of young children substituted for the English hurrah of welcome and its accompanying noise and clamour the most impressive silence born of respect, and accompanied by the lifting of hats and the making of a simple bow of welcome to the Paris guests, because it had come to be understood that Frenchmen always adopted these forms of politeness to each other, and would understand them better than the English methods. There was no more impressive spectacle than this in all London, and the representatives of London must have been proud of this sparkle of touching sympathy on the part of the people who sent them to administer affairs. Such a sight must have told them of the things that are to be expected of municipal government with greater force than almost anything that could have been devised for the purpose. It was no doubt born of the schools, but its life lasted beyond school-time, and showed itself just at the moment when it was needed.

There was greatness in both these events. London in gala dress and happiness, and London in workday routine and costume, surely affords a sight worth seeing. For it was London which was then being revealed to her guests—London, the great city, one and indivisible, not the separated parts which have been used to tear the heart out of the greatness of which London is capable. Perhaps at no other time has London so revealed herself. It is certain that since that time London has become conscious of what it owes to itself; of what the whole of it can do for every part of it, if only it will act as a whole. We fancy that the Londoner now stands revealed to himself as a unit in a great community, instead of a mere wanderer in familiar streets or a casual dweller in the midst of thousands. It is a great work to have accomplished if this result has indeed occurred, and the London County Council of 1905-6, having been the chief agent in the work, will appear in the history of municipal development as one of the greatest administrative bodies of the period.

London has stood on one side for so long a time. Its natural growth to one of the greatest communities the world has ever seen has never been recognised, and it was only the lucky accidents of political partisanship that first gave it the chance of consolidation, and then later on preserved it from the graver peril of destruction. That danger is now past and gone. It is, and must ever be, the

greatest representative force in the country after Parliament, and it is not inclined to stand aside longer, allowing its natural growth to be stunted by lack of power. It understands, or is beginning to understand, its needs too strongly for this to be. The proud significance of the ancient city area as the home of London commerce is contrasted with the silent trend of dock and port further down the river, and the inadequacy of narrow and confined streets to meet the requirements of the commercial community. The spread of industrial London into the more extended area of the county, if not beyond that area also, is noted as the great cause for wider and more completely equipped roadways, radiating from the centre to all parts. The tendency of residential London to find its way back again towards the older centres, accompanied by the relief which railways and motor-cars afford for supplemental cottage homes, is hailed as a change in London life which brings in its train new requirements. The varied beauty of its streets, at once a museum of vast accumulations of shop-displayed wealth in art and practical objects and the gathering-ground of streams of human beings, more eloquent of attraction to the thoughtful than all other phases of nature, is brought sharp up against the hideous stupidities which have been allowed to destroy so many new regions of undeveloped beauty. The newly developed taste in street architecture is recognised as one of the expressions due to the invigorated consciousness of London that it has not only a history, but a future. The gradual but sure development of traffic communications is demanded as a necessity of the times which is not only going to allow of the natural development of its business and industrial activities, but is going to teach Londoners that the isolation of parts is not the way of city life, and need no longer be the way of London life. And, above all, the concentration of education, first by the establishment on broad and capable lines of the university; and, secondly, by the municipalisation of secondary, technical, and elementary education, is revealing to the future generations of citizens new hopes and thoughts having for their centre-point the sense of patriotism within the great city.

These are but a few of the touchstones of events which have cropped up now that there is once again the chance of telling a tale of two cities. Bright and hopeful as they appear, it must not be forgotten that they cover a multitude of other matters not bright and hopeful in the least, matters which point to the degradation of our city instead of to its uplifting. Our French guests



would have been shocked at many a sight they could have visited by a short walk from the centre gathering-ground at Charing Cross or from the homes of their hosts in all parts of London. If we can boast of improvement and hope, we must also in fairness state the desperate need there is for strong measures in many directions where the health and well-being of Londoners are concerned.

London is, in fact, the city of great needs. Its tale is one of stupendous requirements, not of satisfied desires. It looks out into the future, and pauses with halting hopes when it realises what that future needs. On the banks of its noble river; on the pavements of its crowded thoroughfares; in the homes of its working population; in the breathing-spaces which have been preserved in odd corners of its territory; in its many underground structures for drainage, for conveyance, for water supply, and for means of telegraphic communication; in its centres of historic associations—everywhere the absence of the master mind of organisation is painfully apparent, and London pauses in its hopes to ask what is to take place if all its present needs are to be dealt with as its past needs have been. Royal Commissions and Select Committees have made recommendations over and over again, and they remain recommendations still. A dreary catalogue they make. If it is true that London is really awake to its present great position, and that London's representative authority, the County Council, has brought this about, it surely should not be long before these two great psychological facts should produce the man of the moment. In the history of democratic government, the early movement of all great communities has depended upon the master mind of the moment, assisted and checked by the controlling influences of the communal demands; and some of the men who have stood by London for all these years, and who witnessed and understood the inner significance of receiving the representatives of her sister city of Paris, must have felt the warm glow of ambition to move forward towards the completion of the work so nobly begun. And perhaps from among these men there is going to emerge the great one who shall in the near future grapple with the immense problem that remains unsolved.

An altogether different tale was for Paris to tell when she in turn received her London visitors. Paris testifies to her unity in stone, and perhaps nothing strikes the Londoner with greater force than the fact that the magnificent Hôtel de Ville is the proper

home wherein to receive municipal visitors, and that the municipality itself welcomes its visitors and acts as host. Paris does, as an ordinary and proper act, what London does not dare to think of doing. One other feature, not so pleasing, perhaps, but of significant importance, is that Paris is a fortified and walled city, separated from the country by wall, moat, and fortification, approaching the country through military gates and ways. In these two matters Paris differentiates herself from London. It is possible, perhaps, that the first difference may be got rid of by London approaching to the Paris ideal; but, fortunately for London, her line of fortifications is the stately group of battleships which ride the English seas. The Paris walls, however, have this result. They formulate the unity of the city. One never hears of the parts of Paris having a separate existence from the whole. Although parts have a separate organisation, not wholly unlike London, they play a different rôle in the government and aspirations of the city.

It was all Paris that welcomed London, and it was not a new episode in her history thus to stand out as the corporate unity representing the whole body of inhabitants. There were, too, no special dramatic incidents to mark the event. Everything was on ordinary municipal lines. But these lines led everywhere. They led the visitors to the Elysée, to the Opera House, to the municipal theatres, to the schools, to the art galleries, to the municipal workshops, to the markets, to the homes of the poor, and the provision for the unfortunate and hopeless. It was all one organisation. And Londoners felt, perhaps, most thoroughly how far behind their own city was in this respect when a girl-scholar stepped out of the ranks and spoke in good English the simple words of welcome and acclaim. 'We know,' she said, 'that the London County Council has charge of the education of our sisters in London.' There was great significance in this. The fact of knowing was the real point. It was a matter of pride that this amount of knowledge of the London system of government was possessed by the Paris children. And that it should be so is not surprising, for the entanglement and difficulties in the way of rightly understanding how London is governed, belong to most Englishmen, and must, therefore, be still more puzzling to foreigners. But this had clearly been learned—that education in London, as in Paris, was a municipal duty, and the children of Paris could welcome the municipal representatives of London as those who were responsible for educating their London sisters.

If this be a dramatic episode from the Paris side it is entirely within the ordinary municipal sphere, and apparently appealed as such to the London representatives. All else was one long admiration for the largeness of view which Paris has of itself. Bridges over the Seine, broad avenues, old buildings dealt with in the public good, everything done on the broadest lines, as if Paris knew itself to be too great for pettiness. This is the feature that strikes one in contrast to London, and councillors must have come home with a sense of the increased problems which are before them to deal adequately with the needs of London.

The history of the two cities in modern days has diverged strongly. London, like Paris, took its share in the great revolutionary upheaval which shook the nation, but, unlike Paris, it has never taken upon itself to dominate the destinies of an entire people. Both Paris and London descend from Roman cities, and in early years there was much in the doings of the two cities which showed that they inherited the city ideal from their great Latin mother. It is interesting to note that the modern Palais de Justice at Paris occupies the site of the residence of the governor of the Roman province, the London parallel to which is Leadenhall Market, which has ever been municipal property and occupies the site of the forum of Roman London. These common factors are at the beginning of things, and it would be equally interesting to trace out where the two cities began to diverge; for while the dominating force of Paris at the end of the eighteenth century seems to have been derived from this ancient origin, it is certain that London had developed along other lines. It was political, but not as Paris was political. It has now lost or given up this side of its municipal life, as Paris has lost it. And the two cities seem to have come upon a period in their long and eventful history when once again they have common ground of action and common lines of development, both founded on the needs of the people, for the organisation and dealing with which they are entrusted by the national Government. That this is, indeed, the future of municipal government everywhere may well be conceded even by the most sceptical, and that London and Paris will meet this future adequately may well be the hope of everyone who believes in the happy destiny of modern civilisation.

It is not possible to predict the future even with so long a past to guide us. In the first place the people are so different. Gay and careless as the Parisian is, he stamps these characteristics upon

his city. All the outside life of Paris is a contribution to the public character of the city, but it is also a subtraction from the home life. The public life of Paris is lived by all classes from the richest to the poorest, and that causes the public institutions to be not only more numerous, but more representative. In London, on the contrary, the public life is lived only by the poor, and it is not a subtraction from, but an inadequate substitution for, the home life which is lived by those who can afford to possess it. Thus in this great feature there is a whole world of difference. The people of Paris care for their public buildings simply because they form a necessary part of their daily lives. The people of London tolerate them because it is only a small part, and then, too, by a very free choice, of their lives. There are practically no clubs in Paris, while in London they abound, forming the concealed and limited public life which Londoners allow themselves to lead. In Paris one always feels that one sees and knows the place through and through. In London there are always the drawn blinds and the shutters behind which one may not penetrate, and which give to the city an air of desolation and perhaps mystery which, though possessing a charm of its own, is not pleasing to any but the most contemplative of minds. See how furiously quick the Londoner is to get away from the theatre night after night; the long stream of hurrying carriages and cabs which follow on the closing of the places of amusement are quick with the throbbing desire to get home away from the glare of light, away from the hum of public life. Driver and horse seem to share the quickened feeling, and there is perhaps no better means of knowing what London really is than to watch and study this phenomenon of the night. It does not occur in Paris. After the theatre comes the supper or other form of enjoyment; and if this does not happen, the movement towards home is altogether a different aspect from what it is in London. It is more collective. Groups of people, rather than individuals or separated families, travel back, and the whole aspect of the occasion is quite different.

It is not all a matter of climate that makes the Londoner happier behind closed shutters. Walking through the quieter parts of Paris there are pleasant sights to see which no one in London could realise. Shopkeeper and wife will place their chairs on the pavement outside their shop and there partake of their evening meal. House-owners will throw open their windows so that all passers-by may witness, if they will, what is going on; and simple

and effective it all is. It is the living of a simple life in a fashion that needs no hushing-up and hiding from the world. Climate helps this, but it did not originate it; and it is not all climate which denies to the Londoner the same freedom of action.

Perhaps, therefore, the future of the two cities may still be widely divergent, but we fancy that London will be the slower to move towards any ideal. It is difficult to bring home to a people who do not love a public life that public affairs are necessary even to home life, and for public affairs to be conducted well and hopefully, public effort must be made. And this difficulty lies at the root not only of all that has stopped the progress of London in the past, but of most of the opposing forces which threaten in the future. Paris is better off in this respect. She has troubles of a different kind, but not of this kind. Troubles economic and financial are great with Paris as they are with London, but they do not penetrate so deeply down to the root of things, and they may be removed by clever administration. There is no removing the bedrock objection to the development of London towards public life except by the hard process of *force majeure*, when the poorer classes and those who plead their cause are called upon to vote for public needs as if they were the needs of a class instead of the needs of a whole city. There is trouble ahead in this direction, and it does not do to minimise it or to pretend that it does not exist. The way to eradicate class legislation is to do whole-heartedly for the community what the community must have for the development of any portion of its varied life, and to understand that the stagnation or backwardness of a part is to produce stagnation and backwardness in the whole.

Mention has been made of the gay and careless nature of the Parisian. Has anyone except a true-born Londoner ever observed the humour and fun which lie in great masses among the people of London? Mr. W. W. Jacobs in modern days has depicted some of this in special particulars. Dickens, above all writers, most faithfully portrayed many phases of it. Thackeray has dealt with it in a manner not likely to be repeated. But all three authors do not collectively make up the mass of London humour. It is everywhere. It peeps out with drivers of public vehicles who use their horses as friends from whom to draw inspiration for their sallies of humour, and one wonders what will become of all this when the horseless vehicle is the universal mode of vehicular traction. Surely the man who turns a handle is not the same as

the man who holds the reins, and cannot get out of electricity and petroleum what has been got out of the pulsations of horses. It comes to us from the railway porters and servants who keep at bay the troublesome multitude by deftly turning into broad farce events which begin seriously. It comes, too, from hotel and restaurant waiters, who see enough of the grim humours of life to become an almost endless source of inspiration. But it is also apparent on the surface. Butcher-boy and baker-boy and shop-boy are full of it. They carry their goods along in happy ignorance of the sport they give to those who can note the humorous in life. And the costermonger and itinerant dealer, to be met with almost everywhere, are special products of London who cannot fail to attract. One does not quite meet the counterparts of these people in Paris. Those who take their place there are not so distinctive, and partake more of the characteristics of the average Parisian. They send out, therefore, to the observer only what the average Parisian sends out, and do not stand apart as types of what the city can do in the way of carrying on the humours of the time. Some day, perhaps, there will arise a greater humourist in London, who will penetrate what London produces in this respect; and when this shall happen London will appear a happier and more genial place than is commonly supposed.

There is a somewhat deeper note of reflection on this point, if we care to go into it. The cleavages among the different groups of London inhabitants are apparent on the surface. They are almost non-existent in Paris. Is it, then, that the two cities have reached different standards in this respect; that Paris has heightened the general level to the stage of gaiety and carelessness while London has only succeeded in moving in groups of sharply defined masses? And which of the two results is the better? Perhaps the Paris result may be the dead level of crushed-out lives effervescing into heedlessness, and perhaps the London result may be the formation of a new social grouping which is going to have its effect upon national as well as city life. It is hard to determine yet which is the correct diagnosis, or if it is correct in both cases, and still harder to determine whether the differing results are going to lead to different kinds of success or failure. In either case contrasts such as these help us to realise something of what comparative sociology means when applied to two great cities.

Perhaps in these rough jottings of points of comparison between the two great cities of the Western world there may be found food

for sterner reflection than may appear on the surface; perhaps they may turn out to be the notes for a commencing chapter of a new era in history. There is certainly enough material for the deepest thought; for the struggle of life is now in the city communities. There is a great cry gone forth, 'Back to the land!' But those who raise it do not get to the cause of the mischief, if mischief it be. It is not an economical cause. It is intellectual. The science and culture of the day are at last penetrating through to the country, and the peasant is yearning to be up and doing. He is sick to death of the inanities which reach him from those who dole out scraps of knowledge sandwiched in between lectures or sermons on subjects which no longer serve as intellectual delights. He claims his right to get to the cities and hear and know what the world is doing now that it is alive in every direction. And this claim lies at the root of all that makes the great cities of the present. It has built up London and Paris, and London, Paris, and all their compeers must see to it that they deal with this claim in a fashion which fully meets the case.



*HIS MATE.*

THROUGH a repellent country a white road stretched like a bleached backbone, adding to, rather than taking away, the impression of desolation. On this forlorn day there was no colour in the world other than grim neutral tints, low-toned green of fields, here and there bared to the clay; pallid brown of leafless trees, untouched with promises of spring; and snow-threatening sky of March across which the wind hustled tattered clouds. Somewhat back from the road stood a solitary building, neglected and out of repair, a tumble-down board announcing in crooked letters that it was 'To Let.' A line of railway ran along an embankment, but the few trains whizzed by without a pause, at one point crossing an arch under which a road, redder in colour than the larger highway, came brokenly down to meet it.

The land being fairly flat, the white road might be traced for a considerable distance. A man, trudging along, and facing the bitter north wind, saw, far ahead, a speck advancing towards him. Approaching, it resolved itself into two specks, one large, lumbering, and puzzling, the other by comparison minute as a satellite of Jupiter, marked on a chart of the heavens. It was this smaller object which gave Eliot a clue.

'They Poonch an' Judy chaps on t' road again,' he commented. 'Soon back from Rooshby. Maybe they've scent of some merry-makin', though Ah doan't know what, this blasted time o' year. Theer's t' dog, anyway. An' to be the proputtty o' two sooch fellows, blest if he ain't t' gamesomest little brute as iver Ah set eyes on! That theer black-faced chap lettin' fly at un, an' he coomin' along wi' his scrooby tail in t' air, an' his ragged ears a-cocked, as peart an' pleased as if hard words was bones, an' he took 'em for fattenin'.'

He laughed aloud at the recollection, and pushed sturdily against a wind which stung as if it carried ice-splinters. A rise in the ground hid the other travellers, so that when they emerged to sight just where the side road, running redly down under the archway, joined that on which they were moving, Eliot found himself within speaking distance, and in passing flung a brief greeting. The Punch and Judy

man replied by a nod so surly that it seemed to bar further communication, but the next minute he stopped abruptly, setting his four-legged burden on the ground, and furtively passing his sleeve across his face. He had a thick white skin, and black hair lying loosely. His eyes refused to meet the other man's, straying quickly on that side and this, as though keeping restless watch for some expected horror.

'Coldish,' remarked Eliot cheerfully.

'Hot as hell with that on yer back.' He gave a sidelong nod towards the box.

'Where's yer mate, then?'

The man's shifting eyes stopped suddenly in their search and narrowed.

'Wot may you know 'bout my mate?' he growled suspiciously.

'Nowt,' said the other, lifting his eyebrows. 'You an' he was together yesterday, that's all.'

'Me an' 'im's parted.' He went on with a jerk, as if his tongue were suddenly loosened. 'E'd a preference for keepin' to 'isself, 'e worn't sociable, an' I puts it to you, master, if that's wot's wanted for a gennelman in the Punch and Judy line? Why 'e wor that cantankrus that the very dawg couldn't abide 'im.'

'Couldn't he? Yet he's a friendly little beast,' Eliot returned, stooping to pat him. He drew back his hand, marked with a red stain. 'He's got hoort though, soomhow,' he went on, staring at it.

'Hurt! That 'e ain't!' said his owner with an oath.

'Bleedin', then,' persisted the other briefly.

If the man were going to swear again he checked himself, flung an uneasy glance at his companion, and picked up the box. Eliot felt under the blood to find a wound, surprised that the animal did not wince. His master now seemed desirous to explain.

'Got skylarking with another dawg yonder,' he said, pointing his thick thumb over his shoulder. 'Come on, yer fool!'

The dog struggled, and Eliot let him go, staring after the pair as the box lurched along the road. Then he glanced at the stain on his hand, and stooped to wipe it in a tuft of frost-bitten grass.

'T game little varmint,' he said with a laugh. 'I reckon he'll have bit t'other badly.'

He faced the wind again and went on to Rushby. Returning late that afternoon, as he neared the railway arch, a carter's boy rushed out from under it.

'What's oop, Dick?' asked Eliot, collaring him.

The boy wriggled, and told his story as he ran. In a little wood on the other side of the arch a dead man lay in a frozen pool of blood. The carter was staying to watch, while Dick fetched the police and the doctor. When Eliot undertook this mission, and reached the town about a mile away, he saw, propped against the wall of a low inn, the Punch and Judy show. For a moment he hesitated, then ran on.

At the police station the news caused a stir of not unwelcome excitement. Two constables started at once, Eliot with them, and, as they passed the inn, he saw Toby cheerfully wagging his tail as usual, and the man furtively watching from the shadow of the box. A sudden impulse made Eliot glance at his own fingers, on one of which still remained a small red smudge. Again he hesitated, and went on.

The carter who kept watch by the dead man had made his observations. 'He'—they all understood who was meant by 'he'—'wor about t'ooother day with a Poonch an' Judy show. I know un by that lock o' hair'—he pointed to a white streak cutting the dark—'an' there wor anoother chap 'long wi' un, an' a dog.'

The policemen stared at each other.

'That was him in the town,' one said briefly. 'Coom on, or he'll get away.'

He had got away. The show was there, still stuck against the wall, but man and dog were gone, and it was dark. Nor, although telegrams flew in all directions, could they hit upon their traces.

It must have been a couple of weeks later when one wet night he walked into the police station drunk, Toby, as usual, at his heels.

'What's this?' said the inspector, startled.

'Damn it all,' said the man, dropping into a chair, 'I'd sooner be scragged than 'ave the 'orrors.'

Afterwards they found that he had taken refuge in the deserted and tumble-down house which so crookedly proclaimed itself 'To Let'; had gone boldly into the town of an evening and bought food and strong drink. He boasted that if he could have borne it longer he could have got clear away, and perhaps he was right. As it was he was hanged, and the Punch and Judy show impounded at the police station until they could decide what to do with it.

Eliot housed Toby, who might have grown fat on a very different life from the sworn-at, kicked, half-starved existence through which he had so bravely wagged his stump of a tail. It may be, however, that even ill-usage finds its compensation in habit, for

there was a yearning look in his eyes, and though he still wagged his tail when they spoke, it was evidently only due to the answer of a grateful heart. He was restless, always listening and always expecting, but he made no attempt to run away until one night in June when he was missing. Eliot was uneasy ; his wife, who thought the dog low, laughed at the notion that he would not return.

‘ You’ll see,’ she said ; ‘ he knows when he’s well off.’

But her husband’s forebodings were true. How he got there, and knew what he should find, only that strange God-given power which we call instinct can account for. A policeman passing through the yard where, stranded in a forlorn corner, lay the Punch and Judy show, noticed a little heap by its side which looked unfamiliar. It was Toby, stiff and cold.

FRANCES M. PEARD.

*A JOURNEY OF SURPRISES.**THROUGH YUNNAN FROM THE YANGTSE.*

BY MRS. ARCHIBALD LITTLE.

THE journey to Yunnan is full of surprises. It was on May 14 last year that, after a hot day's journey from Suifu, by the side of the Yangtse, we said good-bye to that river for many a long day, and turning off to the south-west followed up the ravine of the turbulent Kwan or Boundary River. For two days, it is true, we travelled across an elevated plateau, partly cultivated, partly a tangle of rambler roses, red and white, fine waterfalls, and ravines, and a marvellous variety of shrubs, but we soon had to come down on the river again by a very steep descent of a thousand feet all at once, and then to our astonishment found it navigable, for I never saw a river that looked less like being so. It is true, however, that the first boat we saw on it was a wrecked one. It was not till the tenth day of following this ravine that we left it, and then only because the stream came out of a limestone cave under a mountain. We had to climb this, and then when we got to the top there was that very stream disappearing into a cave at the top, through a perfect sea of pretty pink flowers, too! Even the pony stood still and stared, as much as to say: 'I am not accustomed to see earth all pink like that.' It was very surprising; but, then, everything was just then. Leaving three limestone caves—though one was more properly a gorge—we had just climbed 1,100 feet out of the narrow, picturesque ravine, with huge blocks of limestone rock almost barring it, almost overarching it, and with long, very sweet-scented clusters of roses thrown across it. Corkscrewing up the terribly steep ascent, gazing ever further into the recesses of the gorge—with hot and cold chills on my part lest the pony, as I made him pause to breathe at each corner, should take an unwary step backward, and we should fall and fall without ever the least vestige of anything to catch on to, into the gorge below, and be at once killed and for ever buried—we arrived at the top, and found ourselves as in a new country, just as Jack did when he climbed up the beanstalk. It was a country like England that

we found ourselves in, with a cool, fresh, English climate, and pleasant pastures with sheep and cattle feeding upon them, and soft lights and shadows, and rooks and cuckoos calling, just as they do in England, though the Chinese say the last calls 'Pao-k-u-uh!' (Indian corn). Presently the hillside became aflame with azaleas in flower, and then, joy of joys, there were great heads of pink and white rhododendron blossom, looking for all the world as if they had just stepped out of Hyde Park, but growing quite wild on the mountainside. We passed from one pleasant set of pastures to another, shut in by mountain tops, that there appeared like softly rounded hills, and thus gradually we descended somewhat, among white anemones, and hedges red with roses and very fragrant, and among hawthorn-bushes white with blossom, but, alas! scentless.

That first climb into Yunnan will ever remain impressed upon my memory as one of the very sensational experiences of my life. But before that there had been other wonders. Before ever I had thought of coming out to China I had heard of the transit of the wax insects—which are born as eggs on one tree in one province, and have to be carried by men to be placed on another kind of tree in another province—as one of its wonders, and there for days we had been nearly crowded off the road by these carriers. For twelve days men carry the eggs from Chaotungfu to near Kiating, carefully laid in little paper bags on trays, a layer of air, if possible, between the trays, in very lightly-made baskets, so as again to give free passage to the air, and well covered over with blue cotton to shield them from the sun, or, in the case of rain, with oil paper. Every night they all have to be spread out in the inns, such a work for the poor tired coolies, who have been carrying them rather an extra distance all day! For it is most important to get the eggs on to the other trees before they are hatched, and for the same reason they have to be cooled down each night. Sixty packages go to a load of eighty catties, and its value is estimated at thirty taels (£4 10s.), a great sum to be trusted to a struggling coolie, so a responsible man, armed with a sword, goes in charge of each little company.

The other great wonder of the road is the Coffins on the Cliffs! The road as far as Chaotungfu, twelve days, was habitually so bad that it was enough to make any one cry getting a pony over it—to ride one was an impossibility very often—but I see in my diary I have marked the road on our sixth day out as specially bad.

It was a bright, sunshiny day, with the thermometer at 77, but with a pleasant breeze, when we came upon a cliff on the left or distant bank of the river. There was a little cleft in its perpendicular surface, and, fixed into this, in a place perfectly inaccessible now, a coffin! I heard the men talking about it, and I saw it. Presently afterwards we came upon a river rushing out of a lofty yellow cavern with pendant stalactites, caves in the rock above it, a mountain over it. Then we came to a cliff with square holes in the face of the rock, like those of the celebrated ladder by which Mengliang led his army up the end of the Yangtse Gorges. And there again there were coffins, this time several coffins. At Lao Wa Tan, where we stopped for the night, the centre of the cliff-coffin district, there was a suspension bridge, a fine one, and towers of defence also against the Mantze. Next day I saw limestone cliffs with caves in what seemed like inaccessible places, but with walls in front of them, and the whole cliff surface so honeycombed as to suggest subterranean passages, but the cliffs were always on the other side of the river, so that we could not get at them to examine them. But then came the wonder of wonders, the huge limestone precipice of Tou Sha Kwan, where we slept the next night, 1,500 feet, I should say, but people who know it better say 2,000 feet high, and quite sheer from the swift, rushing river below. And there, fully one-third of the way up the face of the cliff, the only place where it would be possible, a ledge with at least eight or nine coffins. I could distinctly see with an opera-glass the square holes in the rock into which beams had been fixed to support them, and the beams that had fallen thence, and how the coffins now lay slanting, one on the top of the other, and how one, which had lost its lid, was apparently a tree hollowed out, presenting, I thought, a very narrow space for the corpse to lie in. But the marvel of marvels is, how were they ever got there. How did men ever get there? That, in itself, would be difficult enough; but how would it be possible even now to get coffins there? What was the idea in so doing? What was the forgotten race that had this strange fancy for burying its dead in inaccessible places? Strangely enough, I could never discern any of those ancient cave dwellings, carefully squared, with inner room and shelves, and simple but effective arrangement for 'sporting your oak,' of which there are such numbers in Szechuan. But it immediately recurred to my mind that once the boatmen had pointed out to me what they called a coffin on the face of the cliff on the left bank of the



Yangtse in the Witches' Gorge. I had thought then it could only be a bit of limestone that had taken the shape, because the place seemed quite inaccessible, and only looked at it to please the boatmen, but now it occurred to me could this also be a coffin? Then in the Bellows Gorge, the bellows that give their name to it are very like these Yunnan rock coffins, and I remembered a boatman saying: 'Of course it really is a coffin.' Could this unknown race have extended so far in old days? And what had been the thoughts in their hearts as with incredible ingenuity and exertion they placed their dead in these inexpugnable rock sanctuaries? It seemed a place to sit down and think. Deep down below us the river we had followed for so many days was flowing, still swelling in the middle with excess of water, and swift but not rushing quite so much as its wont, and with a dull, mysterious air, preparing us already for its underground journey—

Where Alph the sacred river ran,  
Through caverns measureless to man.

Then high up above soared the cliff, towards the top already catching some gleams of sunshine from the sun now emerging from behind the mountains, while in the distance we caught glimpse of the wild defile we were about to descend into—a temple to the goddess of Mercy, in a cave to our right, high up in it. There is an extraordinary variety of different races in Yunnan, and everywhere traces of hard fighting in the past, old and new watch-towers, ruins, fields thrown out of cultivation; but which of these races was it that had at one time dominated and thought out these grand sepulchres for its great men? For, of course, it can only have been the leaders who were so honoured. In Mongolia last summer I remembered the great hillocks just upon the border, raised to the memory of forgotten kings, and recalled those grand lines—

My name is Ozymandias, king of kings;  
Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair,

written at the base of a monument in Egypt, where all trace of his works and of his life personality seem alike to have disappeared.

Here, at least, remain these coffins, with, it is to be supposed, the bones inside, though I have since heard that, in one case at least, a party of Chinese did last year succeed in reaching one set of coffins, and opening one, being afterwards very much rebuked

therefor by the authorities. They, or rather some one, mounted, I have been told, upon a series of bamboos one upon the other with sticks fixed into them much like a steeplejack. Of course, the Chinese have a very easy way of accounting for the position of these coffins; they say that in old days men had wings, adding that many wonderful things exist to this day in Yunnan. 'Are not these very cliffs full of monkeys?' Of that last, though, I am doubtful, not having seen any.

All the way along the vegetation was wonderfully varied, great Hoang-ko-shu (*Ficus injectoria*), the magnificent shade trees of Szechuan, changing their leaves, as I had never seen them do, sometimes all a most beautiful yellow, flashing golden in the sunshine, sometimes already in bright spring green livery, sometimes half and half, or, in part, still retaining last year's leaves, and wreathing 'their old fantastic roots so high' as to be scarcely credible; then ash trees, tallow trees, innumerable fine walnut trees, Spanish chestnuts, and suddenly a great congregation of tall candelabra cactuses, presently formed into hedges by the wayside. Directly one comes into Yunnan one perceives a disposition to plant on either side of the way. Thus at times there are exquisite green lanes between overarching willows, or banksia or rambler roses, some double, and all alike sweet. Then, after a while, we came upon exuberant wistaria, with miserable little flowers, though, and blue mimosa trees, and numbers of trees and flowers to which I could give no name.

But for days the road chiefly impressed itself upon me by the long procession of sufferers we passed on the way. They were bound for the same destination as ourselves, but so heavily weighted for getting up those awful hills. With their burdens attached to their backs by back-carriers they would pause, relieving themselves for a moment of the weight by means of the double-headed, iron-loaded crutch they carry with them for the purpose. With knitted brows, the mouth fallen open through suffering, the lower part of the body panting violently, they would gaze upon us as we passed, apparently unseeing, so much were they absorbed by their own exertions and consequent suffering. Carried past them, in a comfortable, open sedan chair, propped upon cushions, with a cloak to draw round me against the wind, and all manner of conveniences in different bags hung round the chair, it was impossible not to wonder, as so often in life, why some people from the outset, and by no fault of their own, seem set apart to groan under heavy

burdens. Some of these burden-carriers were, alas ! so young, and being as yet undeveloped, must thereby become misshapen. Those returning, and approaching the end of their—at the quickest—twenty-six days' journey, often five weeks, in many cases walked bent double. But, I think, what struck me the most was the way they went by us as unseeing, no speculation in their eyes on being confronted with what must have appeared to them such strange-looking barbarians.

Year in year out this long train of heavily-laden ones toils up the steep hills, sometimes at an angle of forty-five degrees, a rise of a foot to each step, down steep descents, slippery after a rain shower, round abrupt corners, past which it is quite a feat to get a load without scraping it against the rock ; and, after seeing this sad procession and thinking about it all for ten days on end, one feels as if any nation that could start a railway would be a benefactor to the human race, elevating man to being the tender upon a machine instead of, as now, doing all the brute, rough work himself. Thinking of the jolly-looking porters at most English railway stations, and contrasting them with the quivering frames, the parted lips, and anguished expressions of these Chinese porters, one could not help feeling as if there must be a blessing upon whoever would undo the heavy burdens. How often is this forced home upon one in China, while one forgets the rivalry among European nations, the competition for the unopened markets, and thinks only of the immense, unspeakable benefits to be conferred upon the poor, suffering toilers of China !

One of the great delights along this indescribably bad road, and, indeed, all the way to Yunnanfu, was the great variety of butterflies flitting across our path, and the tameness of the birds, who only just rose as we came near, flying on to another twig a little ahead, and then settling again, thus affording me a view of themselves and their movements, such as with my short sight is never possible where sportsmen are about. I thus had the pleasure of watching a Reeves pheasant, looking, as usual, as if something were tied to its tail, it is so incredibly long, dipping into the foam of a cascade between clusters of rambler roses, and of watching a hoopoe, with its dainty crest, making its little evening preparations, besides many pretty, unknown songsters, who gladdened all the day with their songs. When we once fairly got on to the Yunnan uplands, the whole sky seemed full of the songs of larks, often to be seen, but oftener singing unseen from great

heights, while at times we travelled, as I have seen saints do in pictures, attended by a great company of songsters—a dancing cloud.

As we went on, more and more of the trees were unknown. At first we felt inclined to laugh at Dr. Henry for having said 'that often behind a Yunnan village a greater variety of trees is to be found than is indigenous to the whole of Europe'; but, after on one occasion in less than three minutes counting seven beautiful different species of conifers alone, I began to think there might be little, if any, exaggeration in the statement, for as we journeyed south and west, and ever higher, there was more and more wood left standing, and in many cases magnificent survivals from what must have been a great primeval forest.

Near Liu-Shui-Ho the trunk of one conifer two feet from the ground measured twelve feet. I looked at it and wondered what it had seen—possibly Jenghis Khan's son and his Mongol army. If only that old tree could tell what they found to eat in those old days! It seems an army would find nothing nowadays. Our coolies had to carry their rice with them. That is the great trouble of this journey—the difficulty for the men of getting food, and the impossibility of finding substitutes, as is usual in China. Therefore the same men had to carry our loads all the way, and although we made them much lighter than usual, yet such a very short distance could be accomplished each day that a very long time was left to be spent at the inns, which really, even after a somewhat large and varied experience, seemed *too bad*, so that I have finally arrived at the capital with a horror and disgust of dirt, and smells, and horrid sights such as I was never conscious of in all my life before, as if my powers of endurance in that way were exhausted. But it does not do to think of such things; there are still, even at the quickest, eight nights to be endured to Mengtse, in order to get out of this ungetatable, but in itself most delightful province. In three years' time the French say they will have finished their railway. Then people will never know how disgusting it used to be to get here; they will only experience the delights of Yunnan.

A fresh stage of the journey began after a most welcome rest with hospitable missionaries at Chaotungfu, a poverty-stricken, rather dirty little town, with a rough sort of inhabitants, but charmingly situated on the slope of its plain, about twenty miles by ten miles wide. Some 6,000 feet above the sea the thermometer

only varied from fifty-eight to sixty-two while we were there at the end of May. There is open country outside with very fine cypresses, of the kind for which the Giardino Giusti at Verona has been celebrated for centuries, not the funereal cypress of China. Particularly grand-looking tombs, with two stone pillars in front, are another feature. There are also many small plantations of privet for breeding wax insect eggs, and, probably from the effect of light and shade, there is a general likeness in colouring and contour to the views of the country near Jerusalem. Then sufficiently close are the hills we had traversed by a pass 7,000 feet high, with their beautiful rhododendrons and tangles of sweet-smelling flowers.

But here I must pause to dwell a little upon the refreshment of coming across such a centre of energy, and hope, and effort after all improvement, as a mission station in the interior presents. One must have toiled along a road left to ruin itself, slept in villages that seemed but nests of foot-binding and opium-smoking, where, as far as one can see, no single effort of any kind is made at bettering anything, fully to appreciate this. Leaving quite on one side the Christianising influence, as seems usual in this careless-about-belief century, it seemed as if that little mission centre, with its girls' school, its boys' school, its free dispensary, skilled doctor, and hospital to be built, were the one healthy, life-giving spot in all the rottenness of Yunnan. The officials in the place seemed to be a good set and on very friendly terms with the missionaries, in this place, as at Tung-chuan, Bible Christians. But Chinese officials are always from a distance, always subject to removal, only for a limited time at each place, and with hard work, as a rule, to make up while in office the sums they have expended to get it. It is hardly possible for them, unless men of very strong character, like the late Viceroy of Szechuan, Tsen Chun-hsuan, to inaugurate reforms. If they will but look with a friendly eye upon those initiated by others, it is as much as one can expect. And for the present, at least, it seems as if the redemption of China must come from the outside. Roadmakers, railway-makers, merchants, missionaries, are all helping in different ways. In Northern Yunnan, of all these, missionaries are the only representatives.

Of the five days' journey from Chaotungfu to Tung-chuan the strips of brilliant red and yellow earth upon the mountain sides and the rock formation are the great features. The first day

was of course across the plain, with very fine walnut and soap trees, the air sweet with roses, the hedges covered with hips and the grass sprinkled with white anemones, but with also fine crops of potatoes, exceedingly red earth, and at times about two feet of fine black peat. Next day I could not help noting down at the time the varied nature of the vegetation, fine walnut trees and Spanish chestnuts, privet trees—quite big trees—in groves, with little bundles of white wax insects' eggs tied on to their branches by straws; fir trees growing among very red earth on the little hills encompassing us, dark purple sloes in the hedges, rambler roses, white, and pink, and double, both scenting the air and yet a perfect show from their number of hips, white anemones also fragrant, opium poppy heads dangling disconsolate, or already cut, and lying in the wet, potatoes in fields, mostly in flower. Then we came to a pass 8,600 feet high, with bracken and pines, and wood strawberries, as, indeed, all along the route, but here alone with fruit already red. And here the special feature of this bit of road began: grey limestone rocks pointing up through the *very* red earth like so many huge teeth, sharp and pointed. There were great masses of slag on the top of the pass, showing there must have been mines worked there for hundreds of years. And then came a descent of *only* 4,000 feet all at once to the river Niulan, running red and swollen through a long village and with a suspension bridge with bronze animals at either end, well formed too, in especial two monkeys, nursing little ones.

By this time we had had a good deal of rain and mud, and next day we were actually over two hours doing the first three miles out of this steep valley. How the men managed it at all was the puzzle. We knew we could not walk, so had just to let ourselves be carried. It took us ten hours to do twenty-one miles that day. We had to get over a pass close on 7,000 feet high, then down again through a region that looked like a garden laid out in coloured sands, on a gigantic scale, the mountain sides being red, yellow, and slate-coloured, and bared of trees, shrubs, even grass at times. Apparently by the action of water these coloured earths had been worked into what looked like crowds of men massed together. At times a figure would stand out isolated. It was a wild, weird, uncanny sort of scene, from which we passed into the rich valley of the Middle River, with large farmhouses, ricefields, hedges of privet trees in full flower; the river itself at times flowing between beautiful green willow trees, beneath



whose shade all the air seemed to become green. By the river at Chiangti, which we left in the morning, there had been a beautiful group of very bright orange and red flowers, which looked as if made of cut velvet, and which I remember as a very favourite importation of these later years from China into English gardens—*Portulacas* I think they are called. And now began the bright blue borage, that has since then accompanied us all the way in such beauty and profusion, diffusing a blue mist over the moorland at times, together with an extraordinarily plentiful supply of berries for the birds, as also blackberries, strawberries, and raspberries. One could not help thinking what a happy place Yunnan would be for a large boys' school in the future, when the railway is built.

The next day was a delightful one, a descent of 500 feet, then an ascent, very steep at first, of 2,000 feet, after that riding along the moors as one might call them, with beautifully fresh air and very extensive views of mountains striped with red, or peeping out between ever varying shades of blue as they were further and further away. We stopped at a famous spring close on 9,000 feet high, and there saw some beautiful trees, in especial a fine sycamore with huge bunches of parasites growing on its branches. One with a scarlet flower like a finger looked like an orchid, but could it be at such a height? After that we worked our way down through a distraught-looking country of wonderfully tilted strata. In one mountain these were apparently vertical and scored deeply with waterlines. Beneath cliffs with caves in them were sheep and cows peacefully feeding, but in the wash-outs were sharp-pointed limestone rocks, sometimes light coloured, sometimes black, and at times taking various strange shapes. The next day these shapes were even more remarkable. We crossed an old lake bed, now transformed into very fertile country, then up a vast river bed quite dry in spite of all the rain that had fallen recently, then got on to the uplands again, so cool and fresh, and with actually sweet-smelling violets in the tall fir woods with their big cones; the first time I had ever found sweet-smelling violets wild in China. But still the hawthorn continued scentless. Then came a descent down the mountain side, covered with limestone rocks of queer shapes, like needles, like teeth, like goblins, like gnomes, like people, like antediluvian animals. It required little enough imagination to fancy that whole hillside peopled with survivals from the past even in broad daylight. By moon-



light, or in the evening, with a drifting mist I should fancy few Chinese would care to venture on so uncanny a spot.

There was a range of much higher mountains directly facing us, as we descended, and between them and us the plain of Tungchuan spread out, all formed into paddy fields, in which little companies of women with bound feet were planting out the fresh young rice. Standing in the mud, with their poor mutilated feet, they were notwithstanding singing together so sweetly as thereby to call my attention to their being women. The Szechuan groom with us would not believe it, but it was so.

It took so long to ride across that valley on little elevated causeways, narrowed as much as possible and always in and out, that I had taken quite a dislike to Tungchuan before we ever arrived there; white butterflies flying backwards and forwards across the narrow elevated way in such numbers as to make me perfectly giddy. But Tungchuan is a far more well-to-do and cleaner city than Chaotungfu, although the ricefields approaching so close, besides enriching it, must also make it less healthy; yet there are beautiful mountains behind it, and many fine temples and charming walks which we had not time to explore. The felt for which Yunnan is known is made there, also a good deal of brass and bronze work; but people mostly taking opium, no one seems to get up before eleven o'clock, so that one rather wonders how anything is accomplished.

Another most welcome rest with kindly missionaries, and then we started again for what should have been a seven days' further journey to Yunnanfu, but unfortunately rain obliged us actually to stop for two whole days more. Rounding the high mountains we passed by a pagoda, that has lately been moved to the south from the north side of the valley, because its original position was said to be the reason of none of their young men passing their examinations. We travelled all that day up a valley beside a very red, swollen stream, which many others joined, sometimes passing by paddy fields, sometimes through pear orchards, often under huge walnut trees or Spanish chestnuts, these last now in full flower. The mountains were sometimes pine-clad, oftener bare, with cataracts, or rather the places for them, dry down their sides. There were many birds; it was a gloriously fine day, and the beautiful blue borage made all the way gay, but of the lilies of which we had heard so much only one yellow lily put in an appearance. The next day we started up a ravine picturesquely shut

in by high mountains, and with many rocks. Then we came to really a large village for Yunnan, with beautiful trees and rose hedges. An old man and his blind son marched up and down and made music for us, as we waited there for our coolies to feed. There was a beautiful, clear stream running through the village, but that was Nature's handiwork; man's had been throwing the skeleton of a carcass into it, and there it lay in midstream with dogs devouring it and hawks waiting by, impatient to get their portion. I looked askance at the streams for some time after this. The ascent from this village was so steep I felt as if it were wicked to be carried. We were some 10,000 feet up when we lunched, in a bower of dry branches, but already before that the views had been magnificent, over ranges and ranges of mountains, finishing to our left, as we looked back, with a grand limestone range, mostly precipices, and veiling its proud head in mist. At the summit of the pass, where Nature seemed most dignified, as we travelled along a comparatively flat bit, a poor old man tottered into sight—one of those waifs and strays of humanity that one meets in the East End of London, in the London parks, in Jewish Ghettos, and here on a Chinese mountain plateau—a man past being of any use in the world—even minding the baby—past, it would seem, any power of enjoying life, past being loved or loving any one, just a wreck, insufficiently clad, and what he had of clothing only rags, yet not a regular beggar—that one could see at once. In the midst of that grand Nature the human waif tottered to the roadside and sat down. Presently there stumbled into sight another almost more wretched-looking object. One wondered who supported these two poor creatures now past work, with what object they crossed those mountains. Was it just to remind us of humanity's humiliation?

We had come across three funerals on our journey, the first in the shape of a coffin thickly covered with a wadded quilting of red, in a village where every one had gone to the play, and our coolies objected to stopping near it because of the smell. One wondered how much further it was going to travel in that condition. Another we met being carried by ten men down the very wide, dry river bed before mentioned. A man walked in front of it striking a gong, and then the ten bearers all sang. It also was covered with red quilting. The third was a very uncanny sight. It was a very mean coffin imperfectly put together of very poor wood. It was being carried quickly away from us up

the mountain side, and two men hurried along behind carrying each a bundle of logs. They were evidently about to burn it, for the poor woman had died of consumption, of which the Yunnanese have a great horror as infectious. Possibly they are wiser than Londoners, who plant a consumptive hospital by a crowded thoroughfare.

But to revert to another very pleasant day. We passed from dry lake bottom to dry lake bottom, flocks of sheep and herds of cows on the pasture land in between the cultivated lake bottoms; the cultivation, chiefly buckwheat and potatoes, extending sometimes very high up the hills, so that I am always wondering how such a sparse and scattered population can cultivate such an extent of country. And yet people call the Yunnanese idle! We came down from our altitude by an absurdly steep descent at first; it then became easier as we followed the course of a quite dry river bed with very striking red rocks on its further or right bank. Up again, then down to Lai Tou Po, surrounded by little mounds that looked almost as if they had been made. They were prettily crowned with trees, and we wandered out to watch the flocks and herds brought home by very happily important little boys, and men in white felt capes, not so picturesque as the Mongolian cloaks, but still giving character to the scene.

The children were as a rule now no longer so merry as on the first uplands we traversed, where they laughed and laughed as if they could not leave off and seemed to be every one's pets; but we still every now and then came upon them playing games, all unwitting of the hard life of unremunerative toil that lay before them. For, as it is, Yunnan seems to be quite the poorest province in China, although there is good wheat, and in some parts good rice, not to speak of other grains and fruits. The sheep are a poor kind, and the cattle seem to be only used as beasts of burden, the milk left for their calves, and the meat probably only eaten when they die. It is not offered for sale. Then the roads are so bad that nothing can be taken away to sell advantageously, and everything brought into the province is at almost prohibitive prices. So far, however, we have seen the poorer parts,

The next day it rained a good deal, but the birds sang just the same and there were masses of flowers and still the same pleasant upland scenery, but without anything special about it, except when we stopped for the night at the Little Dragon Spring, where a most beautiful rush of crystal clear water comes out of the earth,

forming a lovely pool beneath a cliff, all surrounded by fine trees. For two days there it poured, reducing the village street to such a condition I never put my feet outside. The thermometer was fifty-two in the early morning, though we were now well on in June and almost in the tropics, and never rose all day above fifty-six. We came away in the end by lovely glens. It was there I counted such a variety of conifers. There were very many trees this day and the next, some specially fine firs left standing by some old graves. And the next day all the distance was tree clad. But there were also a steadily increasing number of men and women with most disfiguring goitres, though we saw none so bad as in Switzerland. Afterwards we traversed a succession of large plains with very slanting hills enclosing them, each somewhat lower than the other, sometimes old lake bottoms made into ricefields, sometimes otherwise cultivated, groves of fir trees at intervals and little rounded hills. Just the kind of country one could fancy getting so fond of, if it surrounded one's own garden, being liveable in, with quantities of edelweiss, very pretty swallows, and more birds than ever. We began now to see aborigines, once the proprietors of it all, now looking scared as they stood on a hillock and stared at us, then fascinated by the strange sight at last daring to come nearer. The men looked straight at us as Chinese never do. I could not help being struck by the stout legs and fat feet of the women, but some of them were really rather good looking, and there was a sweet little boy among them. The next day's journey was all so cultivated I found nothing to interest me but the wild rainstorms coursing each other round the various hills. We managed to escape a wetting but arrived only just in time at Yanglin, a place with many prettily decorated temples, in especial that to the God of Literature, and with a wonderfully varied collection of foliage as we entered. But even there it did not equal that at Yangkai, where we spent the night before, and where the lanes would have been a real joy but for the innumerable dogs that all turned out to bark at me. In self-defence I sat for hours at the foot of an old tree, consecrated to some divinity, as shown by the little shrine at its base. And even so there was sufficient variety in the tree and bird world to keep me fully entertained. Palms and bananas were now thrown in together with beautiful Chushu, at the foot of one of which I was sitting. I must not, however, forget the lovely little round lake we passed that last day, all enshrined in hawthorn bushes in full flower. That was a passing

pleasure, for we hurried by watching the thunderstorm disporting itself in the mountains we had just left. We passed also by many graves—through the midst of them. And seeing so many on what appeared an uninhabited plain among the mountains I thought to myself 'This has been some famous battlefield,' then seeing quite grand graves to our right and presently a large town—large for Yunnan, that is—and which, curiously enough, we were passing by without ever approaching, realised that these poor souls had but fallen on life's battlefield on which we all have to make our little stand, and wished very much it could have been a better one for all those I love. But yet how hard it has been! With how many difficulties all those I know best have been surrounded from the outset, difficulties and dangers of which one knows nothing as one sets out so light-heartedly, so fearlessly! Would it have been possible to have been warned? When considering the wrecks with which my own path has been strewed, I think, surely it must be possible to warn others! But in avoiding Scylla would they not be whirled into Charybdis? Yet it is terrible to think of the young souls faring forth so ignorantly, as we once sailed forth, colours flying, and expecting to come home in triumph.

The last day it was all hurrying to do a whole thirty miles—Yunnan miles, too—before nightfall. The rain poured and it seemed as if everything were against us. We caught one little sight of the great lake from the heights, but never could see the city till near at hand. There were fine graves and a canal, made long ago, with trees on either hand and pleasant paths beneath them; then a young man lying dead by the roadway, unburied. It was just the same entering Chentu, the grand capital of Szechuan, only then it was a beggar who looked beautiful in death, his limbs gracefully composed and a deep peace upon the young face, at rest at last from hunger, cold, and suffering. About this young man there was nothing beautiful. He had apparently been trying to reach the capital and fallen there on life's battlefield, a beaten man. Our proud train swept on and fell to quarrelling about the right way. It seemed we were wandering all round the city. The dead man could not enlighten us. Finally we entered the capital of Yunnan, passing under and by several buildings that seemed to speak a great antiquity, but also passing by such squalid muddy ways, the recollection of them deprived me of all wish to go out again when once we had reached the British Consulate's hospitable doors, on June 12, forty-two days out from

Chentu, our starting-point, and very weary with what I think the hardest as well as the longest land journey I have yet taken. One of our servants had had to be sent home from Suifu, not strong enough for the journey, another had fallen ill and had to be left behind half way. The remaining servant now took to his bed, while for ourselves we were very glad to rest.

The French railway from Tonquin is really being built and the station here begun. All honour to French enterprise! May it be crowned with success!

## AN EASTER OFFERING

## I.

THE view from the dining-room in the vicarage of Cottington was of the type that would be called idyllic. The sunny little lawn; the pretty borders gay with the first polyanthus and daffodils; the green stretch of field; the glimpse of the lych-gate beyond, of the old church tower—grey and square amidst the great elms, yellow with budding leaf. The village which you saw in the distance might not be picturesque on nearer view, nor the country round remarkable for beauty, but the little vicarage and its surroundings made a pretty enough picture to make the passer-by stop a moment to admire. If he were a town parson he would regard it a little wistfully; if a busy layman he would smile, perhaps, at the peaceful, easy lot of the country vicar.

The vicar's wife sat gazing out of the window dreamily, with the dreaminess that proceeds not from content but from listlessness. Her face was young still, and in its refined, gentle, timid way, pretty still, but the consciousness and coquetry of beauty had vanished before the necessities of things, and its expression when, as now, 'off duty,' suggested that the burden of life was too heavy.

'Mamma,' cried little Basil, in whom the attractiveness of the garden was destructive of any intelligent interest in arithmetic, 'when 5 and 5 makes 10, do I put down the "ought" and carry the one, or carry the "ought" and put down the one?'

'You always carry the figure on the left-hand side, dear.' Mamma's voice was as patient and as apathetic as her face.

'When we took the note to Mrs. Beazley,' went on Basil, 'Mr. Porson was there.' Apathy and patience gave place to a flush and a wince. 'D'you know, he said to Mrs. Beazley that there was a lion in this parish,' and Basil proceeded to draw something with a mane and a tail beneath the neglected addition sum. 'I think he thought I should be afraid, for he didn't say it very loud.'

'Basil, you are silly,' corrected his elder sister of eight. 'He said "liar," not "lion," and he didn't speak loud, because he was



talking about some one and was afraid you'd hear. Grown-up people often do that.'

'Children,' said Mrs. Philips, with a bright colour in her face and a tremor in her voice, 'never listen to what Mr. Porson says; he's not a nice man.'

'But, mamma, he carries the plate in church, and goes into the vestry with papa,' cried Dora.

'Yes, dear, but—— Go on with your sums.'

But this reflection on the character of the awe-inspiring, well-dressed Mr. Porson was too full of interest to be put aside lightly.

'Is he like Judas?' suggested Basil, in tones of joyful anticipation of horrors to come. 'Will he hang himself and be found in the brook?'

'Don't ask so many questions, dear. I don't think that's very likely. I don't like Mr. Porson very much, that's all.'

'Mamma, Basil has asked at least ten questions since we began sums, and I've not asked one. May I just ask one? It's not silly; it's about Easter.'

'Very well, just one.' Mrs. Philips looked reassured.

'What's an Easter offering?'

Mrs. Philips flushed. 'Oh,' she said, 'it's when the collections on Easter Day are given to the vicar.'

'Oh, how nice that will be! Will papa have it? And shall we be able to go to the seaside?'

'I think there would hardly be enough for that.' The mother turned away her eyes, for they were full of tears. 'Besides, I don't think we shall have one.'

'Oh,' cried Dora eagerly, 'but Mrs. Beazley said: "So this new Bishop says we're to have an Easter offering." We heard her, didn't we, Basil, when we were waiting in the hall? Won't the Bishop be angry if we don't have one?'

'Yes,' chimed in Basil, 'and Mr. Porson said he might get ten shillings. I wondered who it was. And ten shillings is a lot of money; it's gold.'

'I don't think he sounded quite sure about it,' said Dora cautiously; 'he said he *might*.'

'Why, there is Mr. Porson talking to papa at the church gate.' Basil leaped to the window. 'P'r'aps he's telling him about it. Will ten shillings buy me a pony?'

'Children,' said Mrs. Philips, picking up the needlework she had laid down upon her knee, and bending a very harassed face

over it, 'don't say anything more about this ; papa would not like it. And don't talk too much at dinner ; papa is often busy on Tuesdays, and it worries him. You needn't do any more lessons ; you can play in the garden till dinner-time. Take little Cyril with you, only see that he doesn't climb on the rockery. Not such a noise, Basil ; put the books away quietly. And, Dora, ask nurse for the 40 cotton, and if baby goes on crying she can bring him down to me.'

The children were shouting in the garden ; the baby lay asleep on Mrs. Philips's knee. She watched her husband coming across the field towards the house. Her face wore no longer an expression of passive melancholy, but of the anxiety which looks helplessly at a definite trouble in the near future.

Her mind recurred to a morning two years before, when she had walked with him along that very field. It was six months after they had come to Cottington. She could hear his angry, eloquent voice as if it had been yesterday : 'The insolence of the man ! Would you believe it ? He has actually taken advantage of my absence to put down a square of linoleum in the vestry without asking my permission. Linoleum, and a horrid thing at that ! I wouldn't have it in my kitchen ! I shall make my mind perfectly clear to Porson on the subject.'

She had not thought the linoleum offensive herself, but she had said—though she did not remember that—that it was very, very trying, a most provoking thing, most tiresome of him ; but at the same time perhaps it would be a pity if it led to a quarrel ; she thought—speaking as one entitled to be hypercritical on the subject—that Mr. Porson had not a very good temper, and that he evidently had great influence in the village.

Whereon Mr. Philips had said that he should not buy the favour of the village by truckling to Porson—that the only way to have peace was by showing a firm hand at the outset. Give way in this and he would soon not be allowed to preach in his own pulpit. The linoleum had seemed a small thing at the moment, but the vicar had spoken his mind, and was treated with rudeness. Then there had been the retaliation of the new lamp put in the church without consultation with the churchwardens ; the dispute with the schoolmaster, who was Porson's friend ; the eloquent sermon preached at Porson ; the strike of the choir originating in the vicar's remonstrance with the leading bass, who was in Porson's employ ; the coolness of his own warden, who was under pecuniary obliga-

tions to Porson ; the violent editorials in the parish magazine ; the refusal of various cottagers, who were tenants of Porson's, to see the vicar or take the magazine. There had been the affair of the surplices ; the affair of the Sunday school treat ; the affair of the church decorations ; the gradual emptying of the church ; the letters to the rural dean, the archdeacon, and, finally, to the bishop ; and now as a climax to trouble and soreness came this threatened mortification of the Easter offering.

'Linoleum—liar !' Mrs. Philips's chin sank upon her breast.

Then she looked up as she heard a step upon the gravel. She dared not rise to greet her husband, for to move would be to wake the baby, and equally certainly if she allowed him to come to the window without warning he would wake it—he had a genius for waking the baby—while to hold up a cautionary finger would annoy him, for he was sensitive on the subject. She did the easiest thing, and waited.

'What, indoors, my dear Alice, on a morning like this !' he cried, in tones to wake a congregation on a summer evening. 'No wonder you look washed out. You take too little exercise.'

'I'll take him to nurse, dear,' she replied ; and went upstairs with the wailing infant. Then she put on her hat, and came down with a smile.

'Yes, I should like a turn in the garden,' she said. 'We'll see how the new rose-trees look.'

'Roses,' he said impatiently, 'roses ! I'm afraid I haven't the heart for things of that sort. That man Porson's been at me again.' He raised his combative chin and knit his stormy eyebrows as he spoke.

'It is trying for you !'

Considering that Mrs. Philips had been married for ten years the remark had a wonderfully fresh ring of sympathy about it.

'It's about this Easter offering, you know. The Bishop has been fussing about it in the diocesan magazine, sending letters to all the churchwardens. Bad taste, I consider, his being in such a hurry to reform things, just coming into the diocese. Such a young man, too !'

'It sounds rather fussy and tiresome. Still, it would hardly do to thwart him, would it ?'

'Thwart him,' he declaimed passionately ; 'there's no question of thwarting him. But if I, as a man of private means—and I'm supposed to have private means—can do without the offering, if

I prefer that the offertory should go to some charity as hitherto, what right has the Bishop to interfere ? The sooner he understands that the clergy of this diocese are not to be managed, and dictated to, and rough-ridden at his pleasure the better for the diocese. I am sorry that it should fall upon me to tell him so, very sorry, but——'

'Even supposing he is overbearing and tactless, dear,' she interrupted gently.

'He's perpetually being cried up as the very opposite,' he grumbled.

'Yes; well, even supposing everybody's wrong,' she pleaded, knitting a bewildered brow, 'still, it would be a pity to quarrel with him. He's not been unpleasant to you yet, has he ?'

'Who's talking about quarrelling with him ?' he cried impatiently. 'It's merely a question of defending my rights against the Bishop and Porson.'

She had to swallow some tears before she could ask : 'What has Mr. Porson done ?'

'Well, when he suggested the thing to me some weeks ago, I demurred ; I said it was perfectly ridiculous.'

'Yes, dear, I remember.'

'Then he wrote to the Bishop, and got that week-kneed fool, Rankin, to sign it.' (Rankin was vicar's warden.) 'He showed me a copy of the letter. They said that I had raised an objection to the offering on the grounds that I had private means, and the people were poor. They were much distressed at this, and wished I could fall in with the Bishop's wishes. Well, the Bishop wrote back—I saw the letter. He said that he respected and understood my feelings, but that he thought it would be better if I could be persuaded to accept the offertory. It was a thing he could not insist upon (I should think not, indeed !), and thought it was a matter for pleasant persuasion on their part. The folly of it, the utter folly of it !'

'Was Mr. Porson unpleasant ?' timidly.

'Oh, no, there was no need for that ; and he was much too clever to be openly disagreeable. But I got this letter from his lordship this morning.' He put a letter into her hand. 'Read it !' he snorted.

She read a courteous letter, in which the Bishop stated that he had had a letter from the churchwardens, and gave a softened description of its contents. He said that he was sorry they had

thought it necessary to refer to him, but that he thought it was a pity to oppose the wishes of the congregation in a matter which might be the means of showing that they had ceased to feel ill-will towards their vicar, and gave his reasons for wishing the Easter offering to be generally observed.

Mrs. Philips was too practised in diplomacy to wonder where the offence lay. She said gently :

‘Of course, he may think that the other letters he wrote to you and Mr. Porson really did some—what I mean is, he may not have heard about the church stove or the clothing club, and thinks things are all right.’

‘He has yet to learn’—Mr. Philips spoke in tones of kindly patience—‘that by trying to please both parties in a dispute you please neither. What did these wonderful letters amount to ? Nothing more or less than : You’d better make friends.’

‘I think perhaps he did mean to be kind. People don’t always give the advice one wants, do they ? What are you going to do about the letter, dear ? There seems something almost a little bit nice about the tone of it.’

Mrs. Philips dared not commit herself to more definite charity.

‘I’m afraid I’m not in the humour to appreciate the niceness of the tone. The utter tactlessness, the absolute discourtesy of writing to me the day *after* he had written to the churchwardens ! The man must be mad !’

‘Perhaps he was busy the day he wrote to Mr. Porson. I expect he is sometimes.’

‘Oh, I dare say ! To hear these bishops talk nowadays one would think no one else was busy. He’s *too* busy, that’s about it.’

‘Yes ; but, dear, if you could overlook this, and not be too vexed with him about it. After all he is a bishop, and we mustn’t forget the children. You don’t think,’ she sounded very wistful, ‘that you could go to see him, do you ? You’ve never met him privately, have you ? And from what people say I should think you would get on with him ; he seems a clever man. And, you see, you could tell him all about Mr. Porson, and why he really wants this offering, and how cruel he is. I dare say the Bishop has been tactless and stupid, but I’m sure if he knew everything he would feel for you. When I met him at the Fosters I thought he looked as if he had a kind heart ; and though he isn’t married, I’m sure he’s a really Christian man.’

‘I couldn’t, Alice ; I couldn’t bring myself to confide in a man

who has allowed himself to be hoodwinked by Porson. The humiliation of it !

'It couldn't be worse than the offering will be,' she gasped ; and then, after a pause : 'And what did you say to Mr. Porson ?'

'We weren't able to finish talking it out ; but I said to him "The truth is, you want to force me to leave." And do you know what he actually had the face to say ?'

'Oh, don't tell me, Edward !' she cried, bursting into tears ; 'I can't bear it. I love you so much. And we can't leave ; we can't afford to. Where should we go ?'

'No, of course we can't leave,' he replied gloomily. 'But never mind, my dear,' and a light of obstinate hope lit his eye. 'If I *do* consent to have this offertory, I shouldn't be at all surprised if Porson finds, after all, that I'm not so unpopular in the parish as he thinks. I'm not at all sure whether the result won't be something of a disappointment to him.'

'Perhaps it will,' she said cheerfully, and kissed him. She did not think it would for a moment ; she marvelled that he could ; but she gathered that the offering was to be, and as the alternative had been to teach the Bishop a lesson, she was relieved.

## II.

Mr. Porson did not anticipate any disappointment from the Easter offering. When he left his vicar that morning after a really ably conducted interview, he was in good spirits. All that he had 'actually had the face to say' had been that if Mr. Philips did feel obliged to leave Cottington it was entirely his own doing. This might be unjust and untrue, but it was not insolent, and was entirely in keeping with the *rôle* adopted in his letter to the Bishop, of the man who was doing his best for a difficult vicar. He was pleased with himself for his skilful command of his temper ; he was still more pleased at the prospect of the *fiasco* the offering would prove.

Mr. Porson was a farmer's son of Cottington, who by hard work and business capacity as accountant and as auctioneer had made himself a nice little fortune, avoiding any risk of having it squandered by wife or child. His range of ideas was limited ; he had bought a house in his native place twenty years before, and had lived in it week in week out ever since. He was fond of his money, though miserly rather from education than from passion. He was very

fond of his respectability and of his position in the village; but what he loved, as a man may love a child, or a hobby, was a grievance. To find that some one had been trespassing, or that he had been overcharged, that the railway company or the sanitary inspector had made a mistake or been remiss, brought a sparkle to his eye, elasticity to his step. When he was not engaged in putting something or some one to rights he was dull; but it is needless to say that Mr. Porson was rarely dull, and wonderfully vigorous for his sixty years. He ought to have been grateful to the vicar; for there can be no doubt that if Mr. Philips had apologised to him for his first loss of temper and endeavoured to be friends he would have been sorry. He had treated the quarrel like an epicure. He had made the very most of it; he had nursed it, fed it, stimulated it. He had conducted it with remarkable address. If the vicar were in the right in this or that dispute, no one in the parish dared think so now; his angry mistakes outweighed his occasional justification for anger.

Mr. Porson was very happy; he felt ten years younger than his age. He had been told on various occasions that he was petty, limited, provincial, fond of money, of red tape, and of his own dignity; he had seen the parson smile at those lapses of the letter 'h' to which his eloquence was liable; but when he thought of the exquisite humiliation that Easter Day held in store for the sensitive pride of his enemy, he stroked his beard softly, and took a glass of port with his supper.

'Now I regard an Easter offering in this light; it's either a vote of confidence in a vicar, or it's a vote of censure. What the opinion of bishops may be in the matter I cannot undertake to say, but that's my opinion.'

Mr. Porson was fingering a greasy pack of cards as he spoke, sitting in his dingy little dining-room playing whist with the school-master and the vicar's warden. They played there three times a week, and Mr. Porson was invariably allowed the dummy partner.

'There's something in that, no doubt,' assented the school-master. 'Still, it seems a bit rough on the parson when you look at it in one way. Not that I can afford to be handsome.' He looked at his cards doubtfully. It was a bold speech.

'It's better for the parson, it's better for all concerned, that he should know where he is and what it's come to. What's the use of a man 'ugging false comfort to himself. Got no spades, Mr. Rankin?'



'Beg pardon, Mr. Porson,' said his fellow-warden. 'What you say is true; but I've reason to think that the vicar is not near so well off as he seems; and, as a father myself—well, I don't think much to the vicar, but I'm sorry for his wife and bits o' children.'

'If a man talks about having private means in order to flout the bishop *and* his churchwardens, he's no business to complain whatsoever if he's taken at his word by the parish. As to his wife and children, one may be sorry for them if their father is extravagant and unpopular, but what we have to consider—what I have considered—is not Mr. Philips as a private person, but Mr. Philips as vicar of this parish. My trick, I *think*, Mr. Rankin.'

### III.

If there had been any one to watch Mrs. Philips carefully during the day following, while she was teaching her children, playing with them, mending for them, calling in the parish, presiding at the mothers' meeting, listening to her husband preach at the special Holy Week service in the nearly empty church, talking cheerfully to him before and afterwards, there would have been observed a look of fixed resolution on her gentle face. At supper she announced her intention of going into Saintsbury next day to see the dentist; and later, when Mr. Philips was preparing his Good Friday sermon, and she had gone upstairs to bed, she sat by her dressing-table with an old-fashioned bracelet set with pearls in her hand and with tears in her eyes.

Mrs. Philips had the sort of conscientious regard for truth which forbade her to say that she was 'not at home' if she had a bad headache, and she had resolved to commit a serious deception; yet the tears were not caused by remorse, but by the thought of parting with her dead mother's bracelet. She only felt vaguely unhappy about the moral aspect of the question. She was going to do evil that good might come, which St. Paul declared to be reprehensible; but then St. Paul was not married, and he did not know the difficulties of a Mr. Porson. Besides which Mrs. Philips had decided sadly long ere this that she could not call herself seriously religious. When the sun went down so often upon her wrath against Mr. Porson; when she caught herself wishing every time he coughed that he might be found consumptive and have to live in South Africa; when the sight of the church made her shiver as at the symbol of unhappiness from which there was no escape

when Sunday and its services were a weekly terror, it was very clear that all could not be well with her soul.

It was only after the bracelet had been made into a neat little packet and hidden from sight, and she knelt down by her bedside, that the thought of this weighed upon her—it often did at such times—lest her unworthiness should stand in the way of the blessings she pleaded for her dear ones. But if God knew everything, He must know that it was not easy to be religious if you were a clergyman's wife. As she knelt on, worn out in body and mind in the midst of her apologetic, helpless prayers, it was left to God Himself to say Amen.

## IV.

Mrs. Philips generally dreaded her husband's home-coming after divine service; but her heart had never sunk as it did when she heard his footstep in the hall that Easter Day as she sat with the children round her waiting his arrival to begin dinner. What would he say? Supposing Mr. Porson had found out! But he came in humming the tune of one of the hymns, and he kissed her as he greeted her, and informal kisses were rare in these days of absorption, so that she gathered he was in good spirits.

He talked pleasantly to the children for a time and gave her leisure to compose herself.

'Poor old Porson is out of spirits,' he said at length.

'Is he?' she asked brightly. 'Why?'

'The offertory was £3 12s.,' he chuckled.

'I am glad,' she cried. She was indeed. Only twelve shillings!

'Rather funny! Three pounds sent in notes in a letter anonymously to the churchwardens: "For the vicar, in token of the respect and appreciation of some of his parishioners." An illiterate hand. I told you Porson would be disappointed,' triumphantly.

'Yes, you did. It is nice,' she said nervously; very busily cutting roast mutton into small portions for the youthful Cyril.

'Porson thought it most "extraordinary" and "mysterious." He almost might have thought I had sent it myself.'

'He doesn't think that?' with a gasp.

'No. I think even Porson is hardly equal to that! I told him I saw nothing extraordinary in the way it was given; *timid* perhaps; but I thought it would take a good deal of courage

to put half-a-crown openly into the plate. I thought I scored there.'

'Yes, dear, so you did, didn't you?'

'I'm wondering how I shall put it in the magazine. Whether just stating the total amount of the offering, or say how it was given.'

Mrs. Philips turned pink. 'Oh! wouldn't you just state the total. Wouldn't mentioning the letter sound—not exactly bumptious; but you know what I mean?'

'Oh, of course I should prefer ignoring the letter; only that the mention of it would emphasise the fact that people who bear me no ill-will are terrorised into hiding their feelings.'

Mrs. Philips shuddered. Her husband was very fond of emphasising facts, the chief fact emphasised being his own unpopularity.

'Yes, only I think the—the people who gave the money might not quite like it,' she suggested faintly; adding: 'I should like to see the envelope.'

'Oh, there was nothing to see; I left it in the vestry. Poor old Porson!'

Mr. Porson was certainly very much annoyed by the anonymous gift. Annoyed almost to the verge of being conscience-stricken. But his conscience was used to parrying attacks, and the field was soon left clear to suspicion. On Wednesday morning he walked up the vicarage drive with a buoyant step and the brisk youthfulness which always boded ill to some one.

The vicar was out. He would see Mrs. Philips.

Directly her visitor was announced, Mrs. Philips knew that her secret was discovered. How foolish to have thought that Mr. Porson would not find it out at once!

She barely answered his civilities about the weather.

'Did you want to see the vicar?' she asked.

'No, Mrs. Philips,' he said gravely, 'I wanted to see you. I have come to speak to you on a matter of very serious importance.' He paused, but she said nothing, and he drew an envelope out of his pocket. 'You will have heard,' he continued with a gently perceptible sneer, 'of the anonymous contribution of £3 to the Easter offertory. Knowing, as we do know, that there are not many of the parishioners who could afford to give so much as half-a-crown even to a popular vicar, the matter struck us with some surprise: I will go further, Mrs. Philips, and say with some suspicion.'

'Really,' she said indifferently, from white lips, 'you often suspect things, don't you?'

'Unfortunately, I say *unfortunately*, it is often my business.'

'Well?' she said hopelessly.

'Well, Mrs. Philips, it is a remarkable fact that every one in the village seems to wonder where the money came from; it is a remarkable fact that the postal orders were issued at a Saintsbury post office, and dated a day you were known to have been in that city; it is a curious fact, very curious, that the paper they were folded in is a paper of precisely the same description as the paper on which the Vicar wrote to me a week ago.' He held the two bits of paper up to the light. 'The water-mark on both is the same.'

She did not look at the papers. 'Yes, I did it,' she said quietly.

He was annoyed at so spiritless a surrender; her voice was almost nonchalant.

'You do not seem aware, Madam,' he said solemnly, 'that in attempting this deception you have committed a very serious offence, not a felony exactly or a forgery, but a fraud; a fraud of a serious nature that might get your husband into trouble.'

'My husband?' she gasped; 'but *I* did it.'

'You would not find it very easy to convince people that Mr. Philips had not been a party to it.'

'But no one, even people who are unjust to him, could think he could have had anything to do with a thing of this sort?'

Mr. Porson bowed sarcastically. 'You are not very complimentary to yourself, Mrs. Philips.'

'But that is quite different,' she cried. 'I may have been wrong to do what I did, and no doubt it was very foolish; but I am not the vicar.'

'No; but you are his wife. And allow me to say that if the matter were brought into the Law Courts, no one would believe that you had not been his accomplice.'

This was skilful. He did not say that the matter could or would be brought into the Law Courts, he merely suggested to her probable ignorance that it might be brought there.

'What are you going to do?' she asked.

The weak and foolish of this world have a way of their own of coming to the point sometimes, which is a little confounding to the wise. He almost stammered as he said: 'I am not proposing to do anything at the present moment, except to urge upon you the

propriety, the necessity I might say, of Mr. Philips leaving Cottington. Between ourselves, he ought to have felt the necessity of such a step long before this. This has brought matters to a climax, that is all.'

'But he cannot—I mean I am sure he will not leave.'

'I am sorry to be unpleasant, Mrs. Philips, very sorry; but I think Mr. Philips may find it necessary to change his opinion. Bear in mind that the Bishop is aware of the state of the case at Cottington.'

'You have told him about this?'

Mr. Porson's sense of humour was very small, otherwise he must have smiled to himself at the simplicity of the question. But his voice was gravely suggestive of judgments to come as he replied: 'No; not yet.'

Mrs. Philips supported her trembling figure against the mantel-shelf and turned upon the man in a passion of anger; the passion that does not seek to move or argue, but that must speak out, however futile the speaking is certain to be.

'Why are you a churchwarden?' she cried; 'you do not love God. You do not love any one. You are cruel. You have no wife or little children. You have no pity.'

Anticipations of the Day of Judgment are not pleasant. However successfully Mr. Porson might put the pronouncement aside later on as the spite of an hysterical woman, for the moment he quailed. He took up his hat and moved towards the door. But Mrs. Philips was there before him, and laid her hand upon the door-knob.

'Have you told any one what you think?' she asked.

'It is not my habit,' he replied stiffly, 'to publish facts before I am certain that they are facts.'

'Will you promise me this,' she pleaded; 'not to take any steps for three days?'

'Very well, Mrs. Philips, neither is it my custom to disoblige one of your sex if I can possibly avoid it.'

When he had left the house she returned to the drawing-room and sat for some time buried in wretched thought, till, as she was gazing tearfully at the various beloved objects in that room which, by her ill-considered action, she might soon be able to call hers no longer, her eye fell on a picture postcard of the Bishop stuck into the mirror. A light of determination chased the tears away.

'I will go to see the Bishop,' she said to herself. 'If Mr. Porson

tells him, I will tell him first. I have evidently been very wicked. He will be very shocked ; but he must be sorry for Edward. I will go to-morrow.'

## V.

The Bishop was filling his pipe after lunch and looking a little ruefully at a letter which his chaplain had just laid on the table beside him.

'I suppose,' he said with a sigh, 'that one ought not to grumble at getting a letter that is so certain to be tiresome as a letter from Vivian when the letter comes alone. One ought to regard it as a staying of the rough wind in the day of the east wind. What's he going to worry about now ? I hold you responsible for him, Dodson, as he was a college friend of yours.'

'Hardly a friend, I should have said,' objected the chaplain with a smile. 'I think he wants to leave Hansford. He has been restless since he came into his money.'

'Never mind,' opening the letter, 'I feel equal to anything this afternoon ; almost equal to Porson *v.* Philips.'

When he had read the letter through he laughed.

'Well, it's more funny than tiresome. As you said, he wants to leave Hansford. He has not been well for some time, and now he finds that his house is on clay. He would be willing to take a poor living if the soil were better. His views, as I know—Why should I ?—are not narrow ; he would be willing to fall in with the traditions of a place. Now why apply to me ? Why not advertise in the Church papers : "Incumbent of country living worth £350 and house, &c., wants to exchange. Income no object. E. P. or black gown as desired, provided vicarage on gravel." The futility of it !'

A servant entered and handed him a card. When the door was closed again he threw it down on the table with a groan.

'I said I felt equal to Philips and Porson : I do. I could knock their heads together without remorse. But *Mrs.* Philips ! This is hard lines ! I met her once, I remember. A pretty, pathetic-looking little woman.' He laid aside his pipe and rose out of his easy chair. 'In the future when you hear me say that a married clergy is a blessed institution and all the rest of it, bear in mind that I don't mean a word of it !'

A few pleasant remarks of the Bishop's were not enough to

make Mrs. Philips at her ease ; but they gave her time to reassure herself that he had a kind face at the moment at any rate, whatever it might look when her story was told.

‘I won’t waste your time,’ she said ; ‘but may I ask, my lord, whether you have had a letter from Mr. Porson in the last few days ?’

‘No,’ with a smile ; ‘he thinks, perhaps, that I am entitled to an Easter holiday.’

Mrs. Philips had been married too long not to smile as a matter of course when a man smiled ; but her smile was a little thin.

‘I am afraid I have done very wrong,’ she said, making a brave effort to steady her voice. ‘I am afraid my husband will suffer for it. I don’t think it was a forgery, but I think it was something like a felony or a fraud.’

She paused, and the Bishop said ‘Yes ?’ Perhaps, because Mrs. Philips looked so much the reverse of fraudulent, and her voice was so low and sweet, the ‘Yes’ was doubtful and kindly and encouraged her to go on.

‘It was about the Easter offering. When your lordship said in the diocesan magazine that you wished the custom to be revived, we knew it would be very awkward for us. You will know perhaps that my husband is not very popular in the parish ?’ The Bishop had inferred something of the sort. ‘We thought that, perhaps, if we did not have one, it would not be found—that nothing would come of it.’

‘Quite so,’ said the Bishop in a voice that threw the authority of his office to the winds.

And then she went on to explain Mr. Porson’s attitude ; the impossibility of their leaving Cottington ; the loss of their money through an unfortunate investment. She said far more than she had supposed she would say, than she would have dreamed she would have had the courage to say ; but though the bishop said little, there was a compelling sympathy in his manner and presence, and she could not be as frightened as her position demanded, nor as secretive as was her wont.

‘I don’t suppose this is any excuse for what I did ; but I couldn’t bear the thought of the pain the smallness of the offering would be to my husband, and I had £3 of my own, and I put the money into an envelope and sent it to the churchwardens, and wrote on it : “For the Vicar as a mark of appreciation and respect from some of his parishioners.”’ Her head was bent very low. ‘I know it was



very wrong, but it didn't seem so then ; and he was so pleased.' Her voice broke, and she gave a little sob.

The Bishop examined his finger-tips very carefully, then he cleared his throat and said : ' As to how far you were wrong it is not for me to judge ; but I do venture to think that with the blessing of such a love as yours, Mr. Philips ought to be happy in any parish.' His voice was not quite so steady as usual. ' Your husband has not guessed this ? ' he went on.

' No,' she said, ' at least I hope he has not. Mr. Porson promised me he would take no steps for three days.'

' Mr. Porson guessed, I suppose, that you had sent the money ? Did he tell you that you had committed a serious offence, a forgery or a felony ? '

He rubbed his chin softly. There was something in the tone of the question that made Mrs. Philips think that this pleasant man would not always be pleasant to talk to.

' Yes,' she replied, ' he came to me yesterday. He had found out in some clever way. I don't think he had told any one, and he promised me he would not tell you or take steps for three days. He said it might get Mr. Philips into great trouble. I thought perhaps that you could help him, and tell me what I ought to do.'

' It was very kind of you to think that,' he said gratefully. Then after a moment's reflection : ' If Mr. Porson has not made mischief already, I think I might prevent his doing so. Then, if you would tell Mr. Philips the whole story, I should like to see him and talk things over with him.'

She murmured something grateful, and he went on. ' Is your husband strong ? Is Cottington healthy ? You are not on clay, I think ? '

' No,' she said surprised, ' I think our house is on gravel or sand, I am not sure which.'

' If your husband could leave Cottington, no doubt it would be better altogether. But now tell me,' he spoke in a tone almost apologetic ; ' Mr. Porson is, I am sure, a very irritating, and I am afraid a somewhat unscrupulous man ; but do you think you could possibly persuade Mr. Philips that always, everywhere, it takes two to make a quarrel ? '

' No,' she said, shaking her head. ' I don't think I could. He is clever, of course, and I am only a woman ; ' and then looking up at him with a tremulous little smile—' but I think *you* might.'

' Dodson,' said the Bishop half an hour later, ' write to Vivian

for me, and tell him that I think I might procure him a living, £250, nice neighbourhood, I forget the views, vicarage on gravel, if he could secure that I had the appointment to the clay. Also write to Mr. Porson that I should much like to see him if convenient to-morrow at three. You look surprised. Look here! I've been a bishop for nearly two years, and during that time I have never either directly or by implication called any one a nasty beast. I am going to lay aside this reserve to-morrow or Friday, to-morrow by preference, at three o'clock precisely.'

# THE NEW HOUSE OF COMMONS.

BY J. H. YOXALL, M.P.

WHEN young Mr. Titmouse of Yatton, accepted by a confiding constituency at the first time of asking, made his way into the Palace of Westminster on February 13, 1906, he was observed to be carrying a book under his arm. Described more exactly, it was only half a book, a second volume ; but, clad in its sumptuous livery of green morocco with floriated tooling, it made so brave a show that the constables and Whips' messengers took it for the greatest second volume in the world. 'That new Hem P's brought his special Testament along of him, for swearing-in, y' know,' the policeman on duty at the angle of the Members' Entrance told the boot-black there. '*He* don't mean to kiss no mi-crobes, not him ! Don't blame him, either—always kisses my thumb myself.' Yet the book was not a Testament at all.

What nestled under Mr. Titmouse of Yatton's elbow was nothing more nor less than the second volume of that renowned biography of his grandfather, Mr. Tittlebat Titmouse of Yatton, which Mr. Samuel Warren, D.C.L. and F.R.S., cast into the form of a romance entitled 'Ten Thousand a Year.' It will be remembered that the second tome of that remarkable work enshrines some account of the Parliamentary career of the first Mr. Titmouse, M.P. ; and it was with filial pride and praiseworthy forethought that the second Mr. Titmouse, M.P., carried with him to Westminster his grandfather's memoirs, to be his chart and pilot amidst the shoals and quicksands there. He also brought a compass and a topographical plan of the Houses of Parliament ; but these were not too bulky to be carried in his pocket without spoiling the hang of his frock-coat ; and thus equipped, resplendent in new and fashionable raiment as he was, from the eight reflections of light on his silk hat to the four reflections of light on his glossy toe-caps, he felt himself impeccably fit for a dazzling Parliamentary advent, none daring to make him feel small.

He passed the telephone-boxes and came into what is certainly the most stately and beautiful cloakroom in the world ; I will not go so far as to say that it is also the most inconvenient, because

experience at home and abroad enables me to say that all cloak-rooms and *vestiaires* are inconvenient—architects deliberately plan them so; and I am aware that, next to the telephone in London, the cloakroom (any cloakroom) is more provocative of regrettable language than any other institution in the world. I do not suppose that this vicinage of telephone and cloakroom at Westminster struck Mr. Titmouse as congenial, but amazement struck him, as he followed a stout little attendant down vaulted corridors lit by emblazoned windows towards a certain Early-Victorian hatpeg of Gothic design, over which in bold letters shone the famous name of Titmouse. Pride throbbed in the new Member's breast when he saw that; high officers of Parliament, of the mother—nay, the grandmother—of Parliaments, had anxiously scanned election returns, arranged the names of the elect in non-invidious alphabetic order, and assigned to the overcoat and umbrella of the chosen of Yatton a distinctive and indefeasible peg. But the chief cause of Mr. Titmouse's amazement was the gorgeousness of the *garde-robe* wherein he had won, at the mouth of the ballot-box, the right to a place for his impedimenta; for he was treading where in more pious days the Canons of St. Stephen's took their covered walks; the House of Commons cloakroom is a fifteenth-century cloister, and glorious still with multiple groinings and delicate fan-vaulting the echoing arcades are.

Mr. Titmouse opened his book. No, the grandparental mind was not reported to have expressed an opinion on the House of Commons cloakroom, though 'Sartor Resartus' was current at that day; but it seemed almost sacrilege to deposit one's Melton on a hatpeg so ecclesiastical in appearance, within such a long-drawn aisle, beneath such a fretted vault. Yet, as is usual with Mr. Titmouse the younger, the utilitarian speedily prevailed against the æsthetic, and he reflected that it would be inconvenient, even to more than the usual cloakroom pitch of inconvenience, to have to scamper along four-fifths of the periphery of a large hollow square whenever you wanted to get your overcoat and catch a train. It was at this moment, and in this inappropriate place, that a Legislator, attired in what can only be termed a sartorial extravaganza, presented himself to Mr. Titmouse's astonished gaze. Incredulously the Member for Yatton regarded him. Below a Norfolk jacket of treacle-coloured homespun appeared black trousers topping tan boots; above the Norfolk jacket a flamingo necktie and a flat cloth cap ringed a shaggy head of power. 'Angels and ministers

of grace!'—Mr. Titmouse stared aghast! Then he suddenly knew the worst—he had seen a Socialistic Labour Member! What he had been taught by numberless leading articles to fear, as the most dire and ominous result of the elections, had on the very threshold of the House been realised to his gaze.

Titmouse of Yatton turned to the impassive attendant, and tried to hide his agitation by means of an affable remark. 'Hat-rack, eh? Very handy. What's *this* for?' Again Mr. Titmouse stared. Were these the vermilion neckties of a hundred Socialistic Members depending from the walls, sanguine traces of suicide caused by English refractoriness to economic theory and any critique of pure reason? No,—they were only loops of red tape. From the very beginning one of the great and permanent Governmental institutions of this country had met the Titmouse eye; dependent from each of the brass pegs was a slip-knot of red tape. 'To hang your umbrella in, sir,' the attendant explained; and, hanging his umbrella in his particular slip-knot incontinently, Mr. Titmouse could observe that one of the properties of red tape is to yield, but to clip and strangle whatever depends on it; as much in reality as in symbol, indeed.

Gloomily thinking of the War Office, Mr. Titmouse retraced the cloister, mounted a Gothic stairway, passed between the neighbouring effigies of that incongruous couple Lord Randolph Churchill and Mr. W. H. Smith, pushed aside a pair of swinging doors and, refulgent, dawned upon the Lobby; where entering, all the magnificence and dignity of the style and position to which he had attained became patent to his view. The Members' Lobby—the Lobby, the strict, exclusive, and arcane Lobby—which one cannot enter unless one happens to be a Legislator, a Legislator's companion, an Official of Parliament, 'Our Parliamentary Correspondent,' a policeman, a postman, a Whips' messenger, or a waiter, was crowded with excited and hilarious Honourable Members; all talking at once, and most of them talking vivaciously; experienced Members giving patronising handshakes to nervous New Members, who bluffed and chattered to hide their lack of ease; old 'honourable friends' clapping other old 'honourable friends' on the shoulder, and crying above the din 'Hello, dear old fellow, awfully glad to see you back!' quite irrespective of Party; and everybody all at once and unanimously creating what Mr. Titmouse, with that apt felicity of phrase which ensures him forensic triumphs, immediately characterised as the very deuce of a row.

Yet something in the scene—perhaps the comradeship, the freemasonry of it—made Mr. Titmouse feel small, or at least as small as such a man could ever feel; he was reminded of school-days, of the first day after the ‘vac,’ or the first hour in a new form; the Ministers and ex-Ministers to be seen in the Lobby suggested the presence of monitors and prefects. A very small new boy indeed Mr. Titmouse felt himself to be; but as it is a maxim with this remarkable young man that if you feel small you should never allow yourself to look it, he at once took up a pose of self-vindication and defence. Upon the rich encaustic pavement he stood forth boldly, his feet very wide apart, his hands deep in his trouser pockets, and his resplendent hat well cocked at the back of his head; contriving to put so much of *crânerie* and quite-at-homeness into his appearance that presently he had the embarrassed delight of hearing another New Member respectfully ask him to point the way to the Smoke-room.

‘Smoke-room? . . . Really, I’m afraid I . . . But I daresay I can find out.’ Mr. Titmouse was producing the topographical plan and the mariner’s compass.

‘Oh, you’re new yourself?’ said the other. ‘So’m I. Browne from Buxbury.’

‘Titmouse of Yatton,’ said our friend, lifting his hat superbly.

‘Had a majority of three seven one three,’ Mr. Browne said proudly, raising his own hat a moment too late.

‘My majority was eleven,’ Mr. Titmouse coldly said.

‘Small majority, eleven, these times.’

‘Depends which side you’re on,’ said Mr. Titmouse magnificently. ‘Independent Imperialist Free-fooder myself. You are probably a Liberal?’

Mr. Browne confessed it.

‘Ah well, never mind. I’m rather that way myself. . . . I suppose most of these men are Liberals?’ Mr. Titmouse was putting up to his eye what the first Mr. Titmouse, M.P., would have called a quizzing-glass. ‘Extraordinary get-up yonder!’ He had perceived the embodiment of Socialist Labour again. ‘Black trousers!—with a Norfolk!’ Mr. Titmouse gasped. ‘Who’s that sailor-looking johnny with a bowler hat?’

Mr. Browne named the man in the bowler hat; also the man in the Norfolk jacket; famous names.

‘Is it?’ Mr. Titmouse asked, with interest. ‘How d’you know?’

'I'm a member of the National Liberal Club. Know most of 'em.'

'Ah!' said Mr. Titmouse profoundly. 'I shall get to know 'em by their cut. Astonishing what people will wear! . . . But there ought to be a fit and a fitness, don't you think?' He paused; he was regarding Mr. Browne's own appearance more closely. Mr. Browne himself was no triumph of tailordom; his coat might have been cut more smartly and his beard have been better trimmed; his hat, too . . . A certain general lack of Truefitt about Mr. Browne became evident to Mr. Titmouse; and when, with those perfect manners of his, he turned his eyes from his companion's imperfections, he could not but recognise a want of finish in the appearance of most of the Members in the Lobby, the Conservatives as well.

Many of the Legislators, to be the early bird that catches the seat, had arrived at St. Stephen's about midnight, and now looked as if they had slept on the green benches and been forbidden the use of a clothes-brush since then. But there was a certain fitness and fit about the appearance of the man in the reefer and bowler hat, after all; he had weathered storms. 'Looks as if he'd had to work for it, doesn't he?' Mr. Titmouse said sympathetically. 'Snow on his beard—frosty pow, and all that!' It was thus that Mr. Titmouse revealed, even in the Lobby, that lyrical vein which had so often cropped out in his perorations at Yatton, when, as an Independent Imperialist Free-fooder, he had unfurled the Union Jack or depicted a starven home.

'Very strong heads, most of them!' Mr. Titmouse had been studying the faces of Honourable Members right and left, and he sought to convey his impressions to Browne of Buxbury. But Mr. Browne had gone, to gaze again fondly at the card in the cloak-room which bore his name, and it was another Member who responded, a man with greying hair and steady grey eye and wrinkle-cleft brows. 'Strong heads?' said he. 'Yes, and strong wills, strong bodies, strong nerves—they needed them, to get here! My new and green young Telemachos, let me be your Mentor awhile. No offence—I was a green young Telemachos here myself fourteen years ago.

'Eleven years ago, and again six years ago, I saw very exquisite young Members come into this Lobby for the first time—young sparks born to it; born (so to speak) on a carpeted gangway that leads straight into Parliament on the level; very pleasant young gentlemen indeed. But *these* fellows? Look at them: you can



see that they have had to climb. No bridge or level gangway for most of them; long stairs and steep stairs to mount, with bitter persistence and almost intolerable pains; Wapping Old Stairs, three-pair-back stairs, for some of 'em. Never mind for the moment whether your or their election cries were right cries; the marvel with many of these men is that they ever were able to become Parliamentary candidates at all. You follow me?'

Mr. Titmouse nodded, and looked as sagacious as he could.

'I don't say that no young exquisites have a right to use their carpeted gangways and come here, mind you,' Mr. Mentor, M.P., went on. 'It takes all sorts to make a Parliament; the House of Commons ought to mirror the nation. There are some exquisites here still who have risen higher than the gangway, by their own merits and efforts, I am glad to allow. But the *always* climbing fellows, think what they have done! From nothingness or next to nothingness they have aspired—out of the welter of the usual and mediocre they have emerged—up from the ordinary and undistinguished to this place of the elect and select they have won; and that with no better start than the million left behind in the ruck. This is true, remember, of a good few Opposition Members, and not of the Labour, or Liberal, or Irish Members only. That round and red-faced little knight yonder, do you suppose he's a Liberal? Or that famous little fellow who looks like a wee Dundreary? Self-made men, and very well made, too; though they don't quite seem the titular and tailored gentleman, perhaps. But you'll find them sitting beside us——'

'I shall sit on the cross benches,' Mr. Titmouse said.

'Why not? This is to be a House of Groups——'

'Then,' said Mr. Titmouse modestly, 'I shall be a group of one. Independent Imperialist Free-fooder——'

'Each of the climbing fellows here had to be a group of one,' said Mentor, 'in his beginnings. But what a one! In East-End slang, "a oner." He had to school himself in books, manners, address, and men-managing. Also, he had to make money, or to create or reach to the lead of an organisation which could and would provide his election expenses. To the customary cares and burdens of life, the toil and anxiety of the breadwinner, and to the honorary labours of a sidesman, Sunday-school teacher, deacon, chairman, or what not, he willed to add the leisureless labours of an aspirant to Parliament. Think how many rungs from the foot of the ladder a man must mount before he becomes distinguished enough to be the

chosen local champion of a Party. Long before the struggle between two, for election at the poll, comes the struggle with six, or ten, or, in the Labour case, with a hundred, for selection as the candidate. And after selection come years, perhaps—years—of political effort; days of organising, nights of public speaking; with endless hazards to be guarded against, and all the while the dread lest Leaders of the Party should damn the local chances by such incompetency or unwisdom at Westminster as Leaders sometimes show. Then, perhaps, defeat at the polls first time; a thousand pounds of scraped-together money gone fruitlessly, the need to wait years for another chance, while the precious moments of comparative youth and energy are flying; and then all the work and worry to get through with again. . . . Is it worth while, do you ask? Not a man here who does not feel that the game *is* worth the candle. But what a game, and what players! Strong-headed fellows, you said? Yes, and strong-bodied, strong-nerved. Remember the exhausting stir, strain, and strife of election time—and the concentrated anxiety or slow agony of the counting! I knew a man—a Tory Democrat, like me—who went into the counting place at the close of the poll dark-haired, and came out grey-headed.'

A gleam of suspicion flickered in Mr. Titmouse's eyes; he thought he detected a quizzical quiver of the lips which had been speaking. But all Mr. Titmouse said was 'Snow on his beard, eh? Frosty pow, and all that?'

'Exactly. . . . You are a poet, Mr. Titmouse.'

'Not much,' the poet said modestly. 'You talk like a book yourself!'

'You carry a book about with you,' Mentor said. 'May I? . . . Ah, I see, "Ten Thousand a Year." . . . You must be Titmouse of Yatton? . . . Delighted! . . . Ah, how different a House of Commons it was in your grandfather's day! All men of fashion and title, or of commercial or professional eminence, then—sprigs of nobility, gentry of the shires, great lawyers, merchant princes—men of "Ten thousand a year." But now! . . . That book must make you feel a Rip van Winkle; you ought to be wearing top-boots, a true-blue swallow-tail with gold buttons, and a beaver hat! When you went up into the Catskills there were no Leagues, no questions to be answered, or pledges to be given. But *this* time—come, I'll warrant you're pledged to the neck?'

Mr. Titmouse shifted on his feet uneasily. He thought of a

few of his pledges at Yatton. He recalled that he had been obliged to promise to vote against Vivisection, Rating of Machinery, Compulsory Vaccination, the Opium Traffic, Ritualism in the Established Church, Disestablishment and Disendowment, Taxation of Bicycles, Dog-muzzling, Speed-limits for Motor-cars, Sub-division of Bengal, Duties on Tea, the Taff Vale Judgment (even now he was very vague as to what a Taff Vale Judgment might be), Registration of Dentists, Alterations in the Royal Oath, Prison Cheap Labour, Inspection of Convents, Flogging in the Navy, Entrance of Aliens, Woman Suffrage, Company Dispensers of Drugs, Local Option, Qualifying clauses in Burglary Assurance Policies, Time-limit on Liquor Licenses, Home Rule, Impositions on Undertakers, Outside Brokers, Foreign Piracy of Designs, Fines on Butchers, Leasehold Enfranchisement, the Carriage Tax, a Roman Catholic University in Ireland, Taxation of Food, Chinese Labour, Entry of Foreign Manufactures, the Mines Eight Hours' Bill, the Land Registry Office, Registration and Licensing of Clubs, Commons Enclosures, Occupation of Tibet, Pursuit of the Mad Mullah, Rate Aid for the Unemployed, the Continued Administration of the Chantrey Bequest by the Royal Academy, Workmen's Compensation Act Amendment, Abolition of Catechisms in Public Elementary Schools, the Tied-house System, Butter Adulteration Bill, Agricultural Rate Act Repeal, the Teachers' Register, Compulsory Certification of Plumbers, Revaluation Bill, Entrance of Live Cattle, Renewal of the Sugar Convention, Outdoor Relief Extension Bill, Trades Disputes Bill, Secret Commissions Bill, Scottish Churches Bill, and twenty other puzzles at least, which he never expected to be able to remember. 'Afraid I *am* a bit pledged. . . . I'd better get the Blue-books and study up at once,' he anxiously said.

"This is Mr. Titmouse of Yatton," Mentor, M.P., told the attendant in the Vote Office. 'He would like to have all the Blue-books—all, you understand, and early. I suppose you can send him a couple of vanloads to-morrow?'

'To-night, if possible,' said Telemachos nervously. What had his grandfather done? Where was the passage? About the tables 'groaning under daily accumulations of Parliamentary documents containing all sorts of political and statistical information collected and published with vast labour and expense—'

Mr. Titmouse looked up from the 'Memoirs,' suddenly conscious that the attendant was scanning him in wonder. A Member who

carried a book about with him, and wanted the Blue-books, *all* the Blue-books, and at once, brought surprise to the attendant. For years he had noticed the cult of the Blue-book to be languishing; Members had ceased to quote long screeds of stodgy prose, the noble spectacle of an Honourable Member hugging five hundred folio pages and a blue wrapper to his bosom while he orated had become almost a memory of the past. But now, this new Member—

‘I should like to have the pleasure of showing you the Library, sir,’ the attendant said eagerly. ‘Five hundred yards of Blue-books in the Library, sir, a pretty sight! You can talk in four of the rooms if you like—the fifth, as you see’—they stood within it—‘is where the old gentlemen snooze; silence kept here. Remarkable how many youngish men elected this time, sir,’ he whispered. ‘Middle-aged men are often very rash, I think. I’m afraid they’ll be making changes in the books here. You observe it’s an old library, this—nobody could accuse it of being up to date. But all the Blue-books, and law books, and reference books; and no frivolities. No poets or *belles-lettres* since the beginning of last century—no light reading, not even Ruskin. But we don’t know what this Government may do. . . . Not novels, I hope, at any rate; in a library like this novels would be low. Though we’ve got a few respectable members who write ’em.’

‘Have we?’ said Mr. Titmouse, much interested. ‘Which? Who? Where?’

‘Privately and unofficially I’m a reader of novels myself,’ said the man from the Vote Office. ‘After I’ve studied the latest Blue-books. If you’ll come back to the Lobby, I’ll show you, sir. . . . There! That’s “The Four Feathers.” . . . And there’s “The Seats of the Mighty.”’

‘Ah,’ said Mr. Titmouse indulgently. ‘But they won’t compare with the book under my arm.’ Yet he regarded the novelists with a certain approval, as being fashionably and even dandily dressed. And presently he was made to perceive two historians, two biographers, a Grecian, three writers on philosophy, one of Mr. Punch’s wags, and the gay pedestrian of ‘The Path to Rome.’ ‘Strong heads!’ he said again. ‘Wonderfully clever johnnies, I daresay.’

But after all, it is the speaking men, more than the thinking men and the writing men, who attract the eye in a House of Debate, and from the speaking men during the early part of the Session Mr. Titmouse had much to suffer and heard something to admire.

Before three weeks were past he had made up his mind that if Parliamentary speech is sometimes silvern, most of it is brazen. 'Unconscionable jaw!' was his term for the weapon of speech which slays no Philistine but discomfits the Children of Light. He had had to listen to Members who went so far as to make six speeches in four days. 'Abominable cheek!' was the muttered opinion of other Members, who had only spoken twice in the same period. There were Old Members and New Members who clung to the green benches afternoon, evening, and night, Parliamentary day after day, waiting a chance to inform the nation; Mr. Titmouse saw contempt curl their lips each time another Member was called on, particularly when it was a New Member, as it was very often indeed. The exquisite good taste of Mr. Titmouse suggested for himself that New Members, like good children, are better seen than heard; but other New Members did not think so. 'Frightfully loquacious lot those new fellows are!' said one Old Member, whom Mr. Titmouse had seen to gnash his teeth when, after eleven desperate attempts to catch the Speaker's eye, Mr. Speaker allowed his eye to be caught by an eloquent new person in a sombrero.

And the New Members spoke so well, as a rule; particularly the Labour Men; to whom Mr. Titmouse listened with admiration adulterated with dread. Newspaper leading articles had often warned him of the Socialist peril, and he belonged to that diminishing number of readers who take leading articles for gospel, authoritatively promulgated by persons of conviction who believe what they write. Listening to the Parliamentary voice of Labour, he used to grow terribly uneasy with forebodings; suppose these eloquent and forcible Members should orate like that outside, to some incendiary end? Mr. Titmouse thought of his hereditary mansion and estate at Yatton, his stocks and shares, his coal mine, and his heirloom jewels; and with Cassandra vision foresaw Westminster Hall turned into a Conciergerie—motor tumbrils tuff-tuffing up Whitehall—an electric guillotine ensanguining Trafalgar Square!

Many of the Liberal Members, too, gave indications of what Mr. Titmouse could not but consider a revolutionary spirit; they snorted at what they called waste of time, they fretted at their Leaders' slowness, they failed in respect to the moss-grown traditions and time-honoured fetishes of the House. They walked about the Chamber with their hats on, they shouted intelligibly, they clapped, they fiercely and obnoxiously interrupted the Leader

of the Opposition; even from the Galleries they cried their pointed but unpolished interpolations down. Thought Mr. Titmouse, 'Can men so unrespectful and innovating as these be considered bulwarks against the destructive tendencies of the time?'

Moreover, it was plain to the observant eyes of the Member for Yatton that a secret understanding existed between the Labour Men and the Irish Nationalists who sat beside them. The very sombreness and lack of jocularity among the Irish showed that some dire purpose must be lurking there. The pages of Lever and Lover had long ago taught Mr. Titmouse that every Irishman is merry, witty, and eloquent; why, then, should most of the Westminster Irish so successfully and continually conceal their native qualities? Unless with some dark and fatal design?

Then there were the Nonconformist Members; a couple of hundred of them, Mr. Titmouse understood; a couple of hundred Anabaptistical persons who would totally immerse the Lords Spiritual, the Church Establishment, and the Voluntary schools, if they could! Yet they assumed the air of mild and moderate men very successfully; none of them tried to preach to Mr. Titmouse, only one of them wore a preacher's white tie, and their talk in the Tea-room did not sound particularly sanctimonious or subversive. And presently, observing with his own eyes and not the leader-writer's, he came to enjoy some glimpses of hope.

He heard a Nonconformist Member talk enthusiastically upon cathedral architecture, and he saw another reading the *Revue de Paris* without the aid of a dictionary in the least. Sitting in the Members' Smoke-room one evening, Mr. Titmouse could not but overhear a Liberal millionaire (quite irreproachably dressed for dinner) converse with a Conservative millionaire on the topic of the minimum income which enables a man to do all that a man of taste and position need desire to do—Scotch moor, Norwegian salmon river, Belgravian house, county mansion and three thousand acres, steam yacht, motor-car stable, opera box, hunting-stud, seat in Parliament, collection of mezzotints or cabinet of intaglio gems, wine cellar, race meetings, charities, and so forth. The conclusion was that a man might do it all on forty thousand a year. Not far away an Irish Nationalist sat reading the *Times*, and sucking at a fine cigar with all the unrebelling air of a babe at the breast or the bottle. And presently an old Labour Member was heard to ask for a glass of yellow Chartreuse—yellow, not green. The heart of Titmouse leapt up. Why should an Independent



Imperialist Free-fooder despair of the republic in the presence of Advanced Members who could appreciate Gothic architecture, French literary criticism, steam yachts, the *Times*, fine cigars, and a *gourmet's* brand of liqueur? There might be no need, after all, for him to spring to the defence himself—he, ‘infelix puer, atque impar congressus Achilli,’ as his grandfather had said when requested to reply in debate to Mr. Vivid, the Leader of the House. ‘I pause for a reply,’ said Mr. Vivid, you remember. ‘Cock-a-doodle-doo!’ said Mr. Titmouse; best speech and finest repartee of the Session, cried the House, convulsed. But the younger Titmouse felt that argument of that degree of pungency is practically impossible to-day.

‘My dear Telemachos,’ said Mentor, M.P., one fine afternoon on the Terrace, ‘your fears are vain. This House contains impatient spirits, unruly spirits, and non-conventional spirits, it is true. They cursed the stately progress of the Debate on the Address, and they bubble over with contempt for ancient customs, I know. But this House will turn out to be very like the Houses of sixty-eight and eighty, in the end. Our heads are safe, Telemachos; also our estates. There will be strenuous action; then there will be reaction; then pro-action again. Flux and reflux—Parliaments are as subject as the tides, or you, to physical and biological law. Have you seen one of those keyboards which shift up the gamut, to fit a new key signature? The House of Commons shifts up at one Election, and shifts back at the next; only it never shifts quite so far back as it stood before. We shift along with it, all of us, Tories as well. Scratch an Englishman and you find something of a Conservative, almost always. Don’t be afraid of theorists—voters dislike and dismiss ’em; the man who aims at political symmetries in this country is lost. Inch-meal, hand to mouth, a step at a time, make-shift till something better—that is the British way. Elsewhere, among more logical nations, the best is the enemy of the good; here the good is the enemy of the best. Every Government comes into power on the demerits of its predecessor, every Government displays demerits and goes out in its turn. Don’t brood over what the General Election has produced, you can’t addle it, and you oughtn’t—believe me, it is an egg full of meat.’

Mr. Titmouse went back to the Chamber encouraged, failed eight times to catch the Speaker’s eye, gave it up, paired with a Nonconformist, and contentedly strolled home to dinner.



*CONCERNING A MILLENNIUM.*

BY A. D. GODLEY.

THEY tell me the Millennium 's come  
 (And I should be extremely glad  
 Could I but feel assured therefrom—  
 It had):  
 They tell me of a bright To Be  
 When, freed from chains that tyrants forge  
 By the Right Honourable D.  
 Lloyd-George,  
 We shall by penalties persuade  
 The idle unrepentant Great  
 To serve (inadequately paid)  
 The State,—  
 All working for the general good,  
 While painful guillotines confront  
 The individual who could  
 And won't:  
 But horny-handed sons of toil,  
 Who now purvey our meats and drinks,  
 Our gardens devastate, and spoil  
 Our sinks,  
 Shall seldom condescend to take  
 That inconsiderable sum  
 For which they daily butch, and bake,  
 And plumb;  
 Such humble votaries of trade  
 No more shall follow arts like these;  
 Since most of them will then be made  
 M.P.s!

. . . . .

And can I then (with some surprise  
 You ask) possess my tranquil soul,  
 And view with calm indifferent eyes  
 The Poll,

While partisans, in raucous tones,  
With doleful wail or joyful shout  
Proclaim that Brown is in, or Jones  
Is out ?

I can : I do : the reason 's plain :  
That blissful day which prophets paint  
Perhaps may come : perhaps again  
It mayn't :

And ere these ages blest begin  
(For Rome, I've heard historians say,  
Was only partly finished in  
A day)

In men of sentiments sublime  
'Tis possible we yet may trace  
The influence of mellowing Time  
And PLACE :—

O who can tell ? Ere Labour rouse  
Its ever-multiplying hordes  
To mend or end th' obstructive House  
Of Lords,

And bid aristocrats begone,  
And their hereditary pelf  
Bestow with generous hand upon  
Itself——

Why, Mr. Burns,—his threats forgot  
Which Earls and Viscounts cowering hear,—  
Himself may be, as like as not,  
A Peer !

### *SHADOWS OF DEGREES.*

A DENSE volume of fog had rolled inland from the wintry Northern sea, and had enshrouded the city of Bruges in a veil of silent whiteness. With the oncoming of the dreary January twilight the wreaths of smothering vapour had swept round the graceful belfry towers, and settled in cheerless opaqueness over the narrow, crooked streets. The sparkling hoar-frost glistened on the stone parapets of the bridges spanning the chill canals, and the tall gabled houses rose indistinct through the spectral gloom. I pulled my chair before the Professor's cosy fire, and prepared resignedly to listen to historical disquisitions at length.

'The number of irrelevant legends that I have encountered in the course of my researches is amazing!' said Professor Colliston retrospectively. 'From a candid contemplation of many of the narratives of the ancient chroniclers I can but deduce the conclusion that the writers suffered from disordered hallucinations, which, as a modern historian, I deeply deplore. Recapitulation of erroneous evidence does not establish its authenticity.'

I opined with conviction that this was indeed the case; the speaker's argumentative glare indicated that agreement was advisable. My uncle resumed his theme.

'In the laborious study which is now engaging my attention—namely, a "Monograph on the Manuscripts of the Mediæval Flemings"—I have found that allusion to incredible superstitions is, I regret to say, essential. They must be demonstrated, if for the purpose of demolition alone.'

I began to wonder at what the Professor was driving. His next words gave me a sudden clue.

'And such stories of illusions are not rendered historical by any pictorial treatment at the hands of an artist of curious repute and perverted mental development. I have pointed this out to Neville Milward repeatedly, and it is an enigma to me that he should persist in drawing inspiration for his wayward imagination from the inversion of historical actualities, and the substitution of supernatural myths. The picture on which he is at present engaged

illustrates the futility of my appeal to his intellectual judgment. I believe you are acquainted with Milward ?'

I conceded that I was—acquainted. I felt that I reddened a little under the Professor's scrutiny. The fact that Beatrix Milward was in Bruges was the real reason for my presence in that city also.

'I have stated Milward's attitude towards his art,' continued the critic, 'without that weight of comment on my part which I should be justified in expressing. It is peculiarly painful to me at the very time when my treatise, containing none but the most authenticated facts, is approaching completion, that public interest should be stirred by sensational paintings on the same period. His misguided genius is devoted to depicting impossible legendary lore. Such creations—at this inopportune moment—are criminal.'

There was a pause, pregnant of rebuke.

If to be hotly disparaged, to be warmly defended, and to be widely discussed, are proofs of modern fame, then such notoriety had undoubtedly come to the sad-eyed, reverie-haunted painter in the dreamy Flemish town. Already the artistic circles of Paris and London had been perplexed by a series of pictures on Belgian legends; and, in particular, all that was fabulous or romantic in the narratives of the past history of Bruges had been used to furnish subjects with an ingenuity of conception and a patient precision of design. For example, the painter's manipulation of that furious night of unearthly hurricane about St. Omer's Benedictine Abbey, when Louis of Maele lay dying there at the last, was as startling a psychological representation as it was a perfect study in technique. It could be felt how the leaves in the stately tree tops remained unstirred by the wind of the wrath of God, while the skeletons of the cruel Count's foes rattled on their gibbets in glee; and their spirits returned, to hustle the soul of the oppressor of their land to the hell of the life to come. Or, there is the wondrous crowded canvas from which Marie of Burgundy's soft young face smiles wistfully, as that most beloved girl sovereign of Bruges rode forth on the fatal morning to hunt in the Winendael Woods. Amid the joy of flowers and of music the spectator of the picture seems almost to hear the croak of warning, which passed unheeded in the throng; till, later, it was remembered by the bearers of the slim girl form carried homewards in the stillness, crushed and lifeless from under her rearing steed; whose memory De Becker has perpetuated for everlasting by the dedication of the last seven years

of his cunning craftsman's toil to the masterpiece of her wondrous marble tomb.

Men asked how Milward managed to drift himself so profoundly back into the generations that were gone—into their sorrows, traditions, and hopes? To none had he confided whence came his inspiration. The sombre visions were reproduced with an indifference to academic distinction or disapproval; without reference to the censure or praise of the modern schools. If he can be said to have been less unapproachable to one man more than the others, it was to the Oxford Professor, the schoolmate of his boyhood, the best man at his wedding, the life-long friend of his dead wife. And never was a greater study in contrasts. It was as if poles of warring thought had bent to touch in passing harmony of peace. And it was characteristic of the men that the Professor should be able to allude unrestrainedly to 'ambiguous daubs,' without any rupture in their relationship. This forbearance was gratifying. Yet the shadow of estrangement had crept between Beatrix Milward and me.

The world is full of shadows—stupid ones of our own creation as often as the darker shades which fall with dire inevitableness. Nothing is more striking than the frequent inadequacy between an act and the consequences that it involves. Beatrix and I had quarrelled; and alienation for long months had resulted, unnecessary and absurd.

It had been such a silly squabble. How well I remembered it all on that afternoon in the London drawing-room. I had been captious, and she had teased. I had resented the quite natural fact that she was charming in the eyes of other men beside myself; and she had wilfully exaggerated to me her satisfaction at the attentions paid her. I had openly decried a rival; and pointed references to my own deficiencies had followed from her in retort. Suddenly I had pleaded for myself with her, and nothing could have been more inopportune. Beatrix had fronted me with flushed, fair face and proud eyes of scorn.

'I do not want such love as now you offer; not thus are women won. You would sacrifice my life to your every jealous whim. Now I am free—happy—unfettered. I should fret at your restrictions; you would grow tired of me. Never let me hear of "Love," please, from you again!'

The disdain in her usually clear voice was bitter. I had vowed I would obey her order, and we had parted. The darkness

of disagreement had descended upon us with malignant density. And now we were both in Bruges.

A sharp knock at the outer door broke the thread of my wandering thoughts. A girl stood on the threshold, and the fog wreaths curled around her slender figure and into the open hall. It was Beatrix Milward. Her face was white as the unstained frost.

I was unnoticed in the background. She spoke quickly to the Professor with a suspicious little quiver in her voice.

'There is something the matter with father,' she said. 'He has locked himself in the studio, and I cannot make him hear.'

She was panting with the haste of her coming. Never had her delicate beauty so appealed to me. The very clothes she wore seemed always to fit her more winsomely than with other girls.

The Professor looked serious. 'He cannot be at work in this light,' he mused uneasily. 'What did you do?'

'I banged on the door very hard,' she said. 'Then I came to fetch you.'

This struck the Professor as practical, and he nodded commendation.

'It frightens me!' She shivered slightly. 'Father has been so different since——'

'Since what?'

'He began that dreadful picture.' The Professor watched her in undisguised apprehension. Then he proceeded to envelope himself in an enormous comforter. He struggled a good deal with its coils.

'We will return to the house with you immediately, my dear young lady.' Here he remembered me. 'This is my nephew,' he explained in introduction. 'He arrived here to-day unexpectedly, on a visit to this town.'

'Oh!' The girl gave a little gasp of surprise.

'Miss Milward and I have met before,' I remarked at this juncture. For an embarrassing moment we both hesitated. Then we shook hands. The touch of her cold little fingers stirred me strangely.

Her greeting was gentleness itself. A wild hope seized me—had her eyes by chance lit with a sudden glow at the recognition? But the Professor interrupted:

'Do not be alarmed, I pray you,' he remarked reassuringly. 'Doubtless your father is somewhat preoccupied with his labours;

it is the same occasionally with myself. But little anxieties of this nature are most effectually corrected as soon as possible, and such accomplishment we will now attempt.'

By this time he had got into his greatcoat. He bade me, brusquely, follow him. I was entirely ready to go.

'Miss Milward and you should be able to get on very well together,' grunted my mentor, as if pursuing an evasive subject. We emerged into the darkness.

I reflected that this precept ought to be very true. I stole a glance at her small white face beneath the tangle of wavy hair, as we passed under the hazy glimmer of a street lamp. It was a face that could be mask-like; but—if you knew it very well, as I did—it sometimes revealed her feelings as in a most enchanting mirror. At that moment under the lamp I fancied that the latter characteristic predominated, and I cheered up considerably.

The Professor plunged through the fog, emitting snorts of annoyance at its atmospheric obscurity. The girl was very silent. I was breathlessly content to be walking once more, under any conditions, at her side.

We groped our way across the deserted *Grande Place* into a maze of devious side-walks. Midway, between the blur of the lights, the dim thoroughfares were formless in the gloom. Nothing was audible, save the dull echo of our own reverberating footsteps, which ceased so startlingly if we halted to consider the direction. We stumbled past blind, unfrequented passages, across faded squares, and around high garden enclosures, where the ghostly tree trunks were silhouetted motionless in the thick air above. Once the Professor stopped and rapped on a most uninteresting stone wall. Presumably it was part of a building, but the fog restricted further view. The Professor explained that here was an example of deceptive popular tradition, unsubstantiated by the fruits of research. The building beyond—which it was impossible to see—was reputed to be the Black House of the Inquisition, and haunted to this day by the victims of that dread tribunal. He continued to observe that there existed a modern ignoramus (whose name I forget) who had had the temerity to assert that authority could be produced for the genuineness of this and other sites. He had just announced, with a defiant boom, that the intellectual account of this incompetent historical pretender was closed, when we arrived abruptly at our destination.

Hidden in an unobtrusive nook of the old city, the little house



was weatherworn and stained by age. The blackened wood-work carving of the antique porch frowned grimly. A quaint iron lamp, which rested in a niche overhead, merely intensified the surrounding duskiness, and, by its uncertain rays, the high gabled frontage looked to lean in menace athwart the ancient street. It was exactly the house for a history ; precisely round such old-world dwellings do bygone legends lie.

Beatrix let us in with a latch-key. The absolute silence which greeted our entry was profound. The studio was open, and empty ; room after room was blank. We searched from attic to cellar. Neville Milward had gone.

It has been said that it is well for a man to determine for himself a definite attitude towards life, and perseverance in such adoption is often avowed ; more seldom is it consistently followed. For Fate has an insidious knack of upsetting the firmest convictions, and tipping the scale till due compensation is obtained for the alternative scheme. With the Professor there existed no regret in rending the romance of the past. Yet, late that night, in Milward's deserted library, I wrung from him the story of the Erembalds as it is written in many a musty volume of the dead. No stranger tale is related in all the eventful chronicles of Bruges.

It is this : In the thick of the dawn of a dim March morning, in the year of Grace 1127, Charles the Good, Count of Flanders, complex character of soldier, saint, and schemer, was slain as he knelt at Mass before the Lady Altar of St. Donatian's. The cause of the crime was simple ; it was the outcome of the struggle common to the age—the conflict between the princes and the great nobles of their realms. Between Charles and the mighty family of Erembald had sprung up the deadliest feud. On the one hand was the bitter determination of a masterful Count to crush an antagonistic power unrivalled in influence, wealth, and political aspiration. On the other side was ranged the lawless hatred of proud chieftains who felt themselves threatened alike in honour, liberty, and purse.

The ruler had attempted repression ; he was met by the forcible rejoinder that no man on earth was mighty enough to deprive an Erembald of his freedom. Prudence and compromise were flung to the winds of impulse ; troths were broken and swords unsheathed. Months of savage enmity resulted in that ghastly blood-stained trophy set out in state amid the flare of the guttering torches in the desecrated choir of the Church. The scene that followed was weirdly characteristic of those years of intermingling Christian and

Pagan rites. Prayers and masses rose in solemn chant around the martyred body for the repose of the sainted soul. At midnight the murderers returned to the sacred building to celebrate in remorse their wild banquet of the dead. Libations were poured forth over the bier, and man after man of the fierce band of Karls drank to the Count, their victim, and offered the kiss of peace in reconciliation to his shade.

Then followed inevitable reaction. With feudal loyalty the kindred of the Erembalds gathered shoulder to shoulder against the world, and were overwhelmed in their defiance of it. From without, the King of the French, with a great army of his knighthood, swept down to avenge his vassal; within, the city seethed with tumult. Shattered in sortie from the Bruges ramparts the defenders were driven backwards for refuge into the Bourg. Traitor hands betrayed an entrance to the citadel, and the flames rose red in the icy east wind of the morning sky. Still, for a while, a remnant of the Erembalds resisted, entrenched to the last on the embattlements of the Cathedral tower itself. In the end, thirty of the proud race surrendered; to be thrown in brutal triumph by the conquerors from the high pinnacled wall. No Christian burial was accorded; the bodies were flung into a neighbouring marsh; and, ever after, all men at nightfall have avoided the spot to this day.

So is it written in the *Acta* of Louis of France, in Burgher manuscripts, and in the monkish Breviary of the Martyrdom of Charles the Good.

There exists a tradition that one Erembald escaped in the turmoil. That, in later years, he returned to his native city, there to finish his days in quietness as a painter, portraying the past glories of the slain members of his race. Still, as in his time, it is said, stands the dwelling in which he died. Nothing of this is known for certain.

Beatrix Milward had gone to her room. In that night of fog no search for her missing father was possible before daybreak. The Professor had patted her little hand gently between his big ones, and persuaded her to lie down. Then she had turned rather shyly to me:

‘Good-night!’

As she spoke her trustful eyes met mine. I remembered suddenly how once I had kissed her, more than six months ago, and an eager longing to kneel down and beg for another, in

forgiveness, possessed me. For a second we seemed in some way cut off from the world—alone. But—there was remembrance; her last injunction still burnt in my brain.

With a little smile of entire friendliness, she drew her hand quietly away and left us.

The Professor had been watching keenly.

‘You have known Miss Milward well?’ he prompted, aiming the remark straight at a suspended saucer on the wall.

‘Yes,’ I answered mechanically.

‘Then what is the matter between you?’ he demanded with unwonted acumen.

‘I was a brute to her once,’ said I. The acknowledgment came out with a jerk.

My uncle pondered. Then he fired off two observations, and left me to unravel their bearings on the situation as I pleased. First, that it mattered not so much now what I had been as what it might be considered that I remained in being; and, secondly, he declared, in still greater apparent irrelevance:

‘There is only one person capable of comprehending the errors of a man, Harry, and that is the woman whom God has designed as his mate.’

After which wisdom he became very uncommunicative, and rolled himself on to the sofa to sleep. The house was intensely quiet.

I, on the contrary, was particularly wide awake. Something was going to happen; I scented it with animal instinctiveness for pervading peril. Presently the vague idea concentrated into overwhelming certainty. The clue to the painter’s disappearance was to be found in the studio. I stole back there noiselessly.

A dim light was still burning as I entered. The place was empty. Yet the strangest sensation gripped me uncomfortably. There seemed a drowsy tremor in the wavelets of the air not quite subsided from the quiver of disturbance. It was as if some unseen presence had just ceased from movement; at my intrusion some peculiar atmosphere of suddenly arrested motion vibrated into calm. I was disconcerted; I was scared.

The studio was a long, low room. In the subdued glow from the pendent lamp, the dim, curtained corners heightened the receding shadows along the dark-stained walls. The flooring was uneven with age, and a huge carved chimney adorned the open hearth, on which the burnt-out ashes mouldered white and cold.

The furniture was scanty, an antique divan, a cabinet of ancient volumes, a side table littered with brushes and palettes. In the centre of the room, on an easel, was Milward's last great picture.

The painting was to depict the scene in Saint Donatian's Church on that night of gruesome banquet round the murdered Count. It fascinated me completely. With consummate skill the artist had wrought out the characters in the savage faces of the revellers. On them was already stamped the seal of the curse, above them hovered the wraith of their depending doom. The expressions in the deep evil eyes were marvellous—the conflicting passions revealed in the curves of the moulded lines appalled. Yet, in one striking instance, the picture was unfinished. The visage of Burchard the leader was blank.

As I bent forward to examine this peculiarity more closely, a low step startled my already perturbed senses. I swung round hastily. Beatrix Milward stood behind me in the doorway. She caught her breath at sight of me.

One hand held a candle on a level with her head in order to see more clearly; the other nervously clasped the folds of her long soft gown together above her breast. The loose lace sleeves fell back from her upraised arms; the perfect modelling of her small white wrists and bare young throat was defined with the rarest delicacy against the curtained background of the shadowy studio. Her gaze was riveted on the picture.

'It has happened again!' she cried in horror. She reeled back against the wall.

'Look,' she cried, and pointed. 'The face there—it has been destroyed!'

I suppose my bewilderment was apparent.

'Didn't you notice?' she cried, in wonder at my denseness. 'It was complete two hours ago, when we searched the room before. It has been painted out since we were here. See—it is wet!'

I looked; the obliteration was fresh. A strange repugnance to the thing possessed me.

Beatrix was explaining, in queer, rapid sentences:

'Twice my father has painted in that face as he conceived it, and twice it has been blotted out in the same dreadful manner. For a long while I have guessed at the existence of some horrible influence which swayed the inclination of his genius, which dominated his inmost soul. At times it seemed to control his very

brushes, so that he painted in servile obedience to its directing will. Do you believe'—her voice sank to the merest whisper—'that it is ever permitted to some awful presence—to return—from that other world?'

She paused to moisten her dry little lips. I stared at her in dumb dismay.

'When I heard father's voice through the door this evening he was talking loudly. He was remonstrating or arguing with—something! It was a dispute—about that face. Suppose——'

Again she waited, and still I knew not what to say. My heart was raging to comfort her.

'Ah! why am I telling all my troubles to you?' she cried, abandoning herself to threatening change of mood.

At this, at last, I found my tongue. Come all the collective ghosts in Bruges in full array, I would not heed them. Indeed, a phantom or two might even have its uses if it hurled aside the barrier between this girl and me.

'Trix!'—I called to her with the soft old name of endearment of those far-gone London days—'there is the best of reasons why you should tell me everything—for always now,' said I.

For a second, save for the rich colour that flamed in sudden glory to her cheeks, she gave no sign. She stood irresolute. Her touch of questioning perplexity stung me with the keenest reproach. Then her eyes dropped shyly away from mine.

With quiet deliberation my little girl put down the candle and crossed the space between us. An exquisite tiny hand reached timidly out to seek me, and we stood with intertwining fingers like naughty children making friends again.

'Very well, I will,' said Beatrix Milward softly.

At this crucial moment I fortunately developed the rarest common sense.

'Is there no place where your father might have gone to verify some detail which he needed?' I asked prosaically.

A flash of comprehension passed across the sweetest small face in the world. It was very close to mine.

'There is just one,' she said, with sudden hope.

'Where is it?' I asked eagerly.

To my surprise she drew back again from my side, and regarded me strangely.

'You will laugh at me if I tell you.'

'Indeed, I will do no such thing!' I cried indignant.

'Or else you will be sarcastic, like the Professor.'

'I shall scold you seriously in a minute, if you go on like this,' I told her. Almost she smiled. But she sobered instantly; and asked an unexpected question:

'Do you know the legend of the Erembalds?'

'I have just heard it to-night.'

'That was the Chief'—she pointed to the central figure in the picture without the head.

I nodded. She watched me anxiously; verily I believe to note if I doubted her next words.

'His ghost is said still to haunt the Arend Marsh.'

'Quite possible!' I assented stolidly. A few hours earlier nothing would have wrested this amazing assertion from me.

'Then that is where we shall find my father,' she said with matter-of-factness. 'As soon as it is light, we must go there. Will—you take me, please?'

She was speedily convinced, I trust, that I would take her anywhere; but there was a considerable scene next morning when Beatrix and I explained to the Professor that we proposed to seek for Milward where the spirits of defunct Erembalds haunt the spot in which their earthly bodies were deposited in another century. The girl's conviction that the solution of the mystery would be found near the ill-omened marsh was unshakeable, and it was in vain that the Professor asseverated that there existed nothing in the manuscripts of either the mediæval or modern Flemings to warrant such a procedure. Beatrix wheedled out of him a reluctant admission that he knew the reputed site in the many surrounding swamps. Further subtle persuasion extracted a promise of guidance.

I mentioned an inference that it would be well to start soon. My uncle snapped. He dilated on the enormities of malign superstition. A strong presumption had been grievously suggested by our conduct—namely, we were in its toils. Despite my impatience and the girl's distress, we were constrained to wait till he had hunted out a large bottle of cognac—which he remarked was applicable to all crises; and till Beatrix had soothed away an acrimonious disagreement between him and a sleepy carriage driver as to the fare to be earned. The Professor deposited himself at last in the vehicle, opining with severity that in the whole course of a life spent in grappling with the higher problems of existence, he had never set forth on a madder errand.

He became more lugubrious as the drive proceeded. He said

that the inertia of the country induced senility. The morning was melancholy, with all that sombre greyness of the northern lowlands. In the foreboding stillness the horse's hoofs clanged drearily on the hardened road. Once outside the town, the dull monotony of the country plain was broken solely by the bare branches of the trees on whose leafless boughs the frost clustered with icy whiteness. The wintry air was thick with rolling fog wreaths drifting vaguely. Now they lifted sluggishly to open fantastic vistas of unending wastes; now they resettled clingingly over the pools of sullen water, and the hedgerows stunted by the sea wind. After a while we left the carriage and turned down a lonely lane. It terminated in a wilderness of marsh fading into obscurity in the mist.

The Professor led the way. His pre-occupied manner protested that he was acting from an unaccountable sense of duty alone. Presently he indicated that unimpeachable information derived from different corroborative sources denoted this to be the ancient Arend marshland. Here, in the buried century, the Erembalds found their graves. The historian mentioned the matter as an interesting independent fact which had no bearing on our search. He regarded us mistrustfully.

It was a fit spot for strange visions and evil shapes.

When I look back upon the events of that morning there is a strange discrepancy between my memory and my later judgment as to the length of time that passed amid the rioting cloud-whirls on the shrouded marsh. In the pale light a dim feeling of illusion grew stronger with every step I took.

Amid the mocking masses of rising vapour my excited fancy pictured monstrous shadows stealing through the haunted gloom. On approach, the phantom figures faded, dissolving into wisps of silvery mist. A superstitious dread numbed my brain into a kind of mental torpor, in which the phantasy appeared the real. Focussed in the medium of seething whiteness a long-robed, haggard shape was beckoning me with imperious gesture of command.

Its face, too, was defined by some mysterious process. Inscrutable ghoulish eyes flashed with haughty fierceness, cruel lips were proud with swollen scorn. The mien was that of a chieftain, careless alike of the warnings of God or man, reckless of Heaven's atoning mercy for the blackening crimes of a vengeful soul. The glamour of its spell was exorcised by Beatrix Milward's voice.



'There is something moving!' she cried to me hoarsely. 'Harry, I—I am afraid!'

To every man who loves there comes a moment when he realises that every energy is demanded of him in protection of one woman alone; the supreme claim is for the one who craves the care, and who requires it by right of the love which binds a man to woman. She needed me; and, as we turned towards each other, all the shadows seemed to lighten, and the horror of dividing darkness passed away.

Breaking through the mist came a human form. It was Milward. He walked straight up to his daughter. He spoke in quiet, conventional tones:

'I can paint the face correctly now—because—I've seen——'

He stopped and staggered. Next minute he fell in a dead faint at our feet.

The Professor and his cognac bottle came to our assistance; and we took the wanderer home to Bruges.

In after days Milward completed his picture. He informed us briefly that he had changed his conception; and Beatrix tells me that the face of Burchard, the leader, is entirely different from the one first painted on the canvas. I am not fond of looking at it, since it reminds me disquietingly of that fancied glimpse of a something in the mists of the Arend marsh.

The Professor declined testily to enlighten me when I asked him whether he also had experienced any unusual sensations on the same occasion. He subsequently added, however, a significant note to his work on the 'Mediæval Manuscripts,' and was very much annoyed with an 'Athenæum' reviewer who analysed the contents adversely. When I inquired again of the historian if Milward's house in Bruges was really the one where the last of the Erembalds had lived and painted, he actually temporised. He hinted judiciously that to arrive at a correct estimate of even contemporary history required abilities beyond my mental qualifications. From which I am inclined to gather that the Professor as well had somewhat modified his views.

He astounded me tremendously a day later. I was sitting disconsolately over the study fire in the waning light of the afternoon, trying to invent an excuse to call on the Milwards.

'All women,' he exploded oracularly at my dumfounded head, 'prefer imaginative men to practical ones. That is the reason why

Beatrix's mother married a painter instead of choosing me. I concluded at the time that she displayed a profound lack of consideration. But merit rarely wins a wife ; therefore, there is a chance for you !'

I poked the fire despondently. The Professor sniffed.

'I should advise that you go and visit Miss Milward now,' he went on, with commendable tact. 'Explain to her as logically as possible that you have been an idiot. I have perceived an indication that she is not indifferent to you.'

At this I ceased to batter the coals in the grate, and went out. The streets of Bruges can be the happiest and sunniest thoroughfares in the world.

Beatrix received me sedately, and offered tea. This also can be the most delightful meal ever invented. We discussed the alterations in the opinions of eminent men.

'Girls have been known to change their minds sometimes,' remarked my companion pensively. She bent down to pat a fidgety terrier which was clamouring for biscuit. I felt capable of behaving badly to the little brute if it absorbed her attention too completely. 'Indeed, all people can,' she murmured very low.

I said nothing. This momentous statement required time to assimilate. In the ensuing silence I received the fleetest of glances from under bewitching soft lashes.

'Once I received your orders never to speak of a certain subject any more,' I reminded her with regretful firmness. 'And obedience is my bane.'

For a second her aloofness was elaborately tantalising. Then she raised her eyes. A tender tell-tale brilliance shone in them enchantingly.

'I think—I will change my mandate now,' said Beatrix Milward, quite demurely.

Thus I was allowed to mention 'Love' again.

ARTHUR H. HENDERSON.

## FROM A COLLEGE WINDOW.

## XII.

THERE is a motto which I should like to see written over the door of every place of worship, both as an invitation and a warning: THOU SHALT MAKE ME TO UNDERSTAND WISDOM SECRETLY. It is an invitation to those who enter to come and participate in a great and holy mystery; and it is a warning to those who believe that in the formalities of religion alone is the secret of religion to be found. I will not here speak of worship, of the value of the symbol, the winged prayer, the uttered word; I wish rather to speak for a little of religion itself, a thing, as I believe, greatly misunderstood. How much it is misunderstood may be seen from the fact that though the word itself, religion, stands for one of the most beautiful and simple things in the world, there yet hangs about it an aroma which is not wholly pleasing. What difficult service that great and humble name has seen! With what strange and evil meanings it has been charged! How dented and battered it is with hard usage! how dimmed its radiance, how stained its purity! It is the best word, perhaps the only word, for the thing that I mean; and yet something dusty and technical hangs about it, which makes it wearisome instead of delightful, dreary rather than joyful. The same is the case with many of the words which stand for great things. They have been weapons in the hands of dry, bigoted, offensive persons, until their brightness is clouded, their keen edge hacked and broken.

By religion I mean the power, whatever it be, which makes a man choose what is hard rather than what is easy, what is lofty and noble rather than what is mean and selfish; that puts courage into timorous hearts, and gladness into clouded spirits; that consoles men in grief, misfortune, and disappointment; that makes them joyfully accept a heavy burden; that, in a word, uplifts men out of the dominion of material things, and sets their feet in a purer and simpler region.

Yet this great thing, which lies so near us that we can take it into our grasp by merely reaching out a hand; which is as close

to us as the air and the sunlight, has been by the sad, misguided efforts, very often of the best and noblest-minded men, who knew how precious a thing it was, so guarded, so wrapped up, made so remote, so alien to life and thought, that many people who live by its light and draw it in as simply as the air they breathe, never even know that they have come within hail of it. 'Is he a good man?' said a simple Methodist once, in reply to a question about a friend. 'Yes, he is good, but not religious-good.' By which he meant that he lived kindly, purely, and unselfishly as a Christian should, but did not attend any particular place of worship, and therefore could not be held to have any religious motive for his actions, but was guided by a mere worthless instinct, a preference for unworldly living.

Now, if ever there was a Divine attempt made in the world to shake religion free of its wrappings it was the preaching of Christ. So far as we can gather from records of obscure and mysterious origin, translations, it would seem, of something oral and traditional, Christ aimed at bringing religion within the reach of the humblest and simplest souls. Whatever doubt men may feel as to the literal accuracy of these records in matters of fact, however much it may be held that the relation of incidents was coloured by the popular belief of the time in the possibility of miraculous manifestations, yet the words and sayings of Christ emerge from the narrative, though in places it seems as though they had been imperfectly apprehended, as containing and expressing thoughts quite outside the range of the minds that recorded them, and thus possess an authenticity, which is confirmed and proved by the immature mental grasp of those who compiled the records, in a way in which it would not have been proved if the compilers had been obviously men of mental acuteness and far-reaching philosophical grasp.

To express the religion of Christ in precise words would be a mighty task; but it may be said that it was not merely a system, nor primarily a creed; it was a message to individual hearts, bewildered by the complexity of the world and the intricacy of religious observances. Christ bade men believe that their Creator was also a Father; that the only way to escape from the overwhelming difficulties presented by the world was the way of simplicity, sincerity, and love; that a man should keep out of his life all that insults and hurts the soul, and that he should hold the interests of others as dear as he held his own. It was a protest

against all ambition, and cruelty, and luxury, and self-conceit. It showed that a man should accept his temperament and his place in life as gifts from the hands of his Father ; and that he should then be peaceful, pure, humble, and loving. Christ brought into the world an entirely new standard ; He showed that many respected and revered persons were very far indeed from the Father ; while many obscure, sinful, miserable outcasts found the secret which the respectable and contemptuous missed. Never was there a message which cast so much hope abroad in rich handfuls to the world. The astonishing part of the revelation was that it was so absolutely simple ; neither wealth, nor intellect, nor position, nor even moral perfection was needed. The simplest child, the most abandoned sinner could take the great gift as easily as the most honoured statesman, the wisest sage—indeed more easily ; for it was the very complexity of affairs, of motives, of wealth, that entangled the soul and prevented it from realising its freedom.

Christ lived His human life on these principles ; and sank from danger to danger, from disaster to disaster, and having touched the whole gamut of human suffering, and disappointment, and shame, died a death in which no element of disgust, and terror, and pain was wanting.

And from that moment the deterioration began. At first the great secret ran silently through the world from soul to soul, till the world was leavened. But even so the process of capturing and transforming the faith in accordance with human weakness began. The intellectual spirit laid hold on it first. Metaphysicians scrutinised the humble and sweet mystery, overlaid it with definitions, harmonised it with ancient systems, dogmatised it, made it hard, and subtle, and uninspiring. Vivid metaphors and illustrations were seized upon and converted into precise statements of principles. The very misapprehensions of the original hearers were invested with the same sanctity that belonged to the Master Himself. But even so the bright and beautiful spirit made its way, like a stream of clear water, refreshing thirsty places and making the desert bloom like the rose, till at last the world itself, in the middle of its luxuries and pomp, became aware that here was a mighty force abroad which must be reckoned with ; and then the world itself determined upon the capture of Christianity ; and how sadly it succeeded can be read in the pages of history ; until at last the pure creature, like a barbarian captive bright with youth and beauty, was bound with golden chains and bidden, bewildered

and amazed, grace the triumph and ride in the very chariot of its conqueror.

Let me take one salient instance. Could there, to any impartial observer, be anything in the world more incredible than that the Pope, surrounded by ritual and pomp, and hierarchies, and policies, should be held to be the representative on earth of the peasant-teacher of Galilee? And yet the melancholy process of development is plain enough. As the world became Christianised, it could not be expected to give up its social order, its ambitions, its love of power and influence. Christianity uncurbed is an inconvenient, a dangerous, a subversive force; it must be tamed and muzzled; it must be robbed and crowned; it must be given a high and honoured place among institutions. And so it has fallen a victim to bribery and intrigue and worldly power.

I do not for a moment say that it does not even thus inspire thousands of hearts to simple, loving, and heroic conduct. The secret is far too vital to lose its power. It is a vast force in the world, and indeed survives its capture in virtue of its truth and beauty. But instead of being the most free, the most independent, the most individualistic force in the world, it has become the most authoritarian, the most traditional, the most rigid of systems. As in the tale of Gulliver, it is a giant indeed, and can yet perform gigantic services; but it is bound and fettered by a puny race.

Further, there are some who would divide religion sharply into two aspects, the objective and the subjective. Those who emphasise the objective aspect, would maintain that the theory that underlies all religion is the idea of sacrifice. This view is held strongly by Roman Catholics and by a large section of Anglicans as well. They would hold that the duty of the priest is the offering of this sacrifice, and that the essential truth of the Christian revelation was the sacrifice of God Himself upon God's own altar. This sacrifice, this atonement, they would say, can be and must be made over and over upon the altar of God. They would hold that this offering had its objective value, even though it were offered without the mental concurrence of those for whom it was offered. They would urge that the primal necessity for the faithful is that by an act of the will, not necessarily an emotional act, but an act of pure and definite volition, they should associate themselves with the true and perfect sacrifice; that souls that do this sincerely are caught up, so to speak, into the heavenly chariot of God, and move upward thus; while the

merely subjective and emotional religion is, to continue the metaphor, as if a man should gird up his loins to run in company with the heavenly impulse. They would say that the objective act of worship may have a subjective emotional effect, but that it has a true value quite independent of any subjective effect. They would say that the idea of sacrifice is a primal instinct of human nature, implanted in hearts by God himself, and borne witness to by the whole history of man.

Those who, like myself, believe rather in the subjective side, the emotional effect of religion, would hold that the idea of sacrifice is certainly a primal human instinct, but that the true interpretation had been put upon it by the teaching of Christ. I should myself feel that the idea of sacrifice belonged wholly to the old dispensation. That man, when he began to form some mental picture of the mysterious nature of the world in which he found himself a part, saw that there was in the background of life a vast and awful power, whose laws were mysterious, and not, apparently, wholly benevolent; that this power sometimes sent happiness and prosperity, sometimes sorrow and adversity; and that though to a certain extent calamities were brought about by individual misconduct, yet that there were innumerable instances in the world where innocence and even conscientious conduct were just as heavily penalised as guilt and sin. The apparently fortuitous distribution of happiness would alarm and bewilder him. The natural instinct of man, thus face to face with a Deity which he could not hope to overcome or struggle with, would be to conciliate and propitiate him by all the means in his power, as he would offer gifts to a prince or chief. He would hope thus to win his favour and not to incur his wrath.

But the teaching of the Saviour that God was indeed a Father of men seems to me to have changed all this instantaneously. Man would learn that misfortune was sent him not wantonly nor cruelly, but that it was an educative process. If even so he saw cases, such as a child tortured by agonising pain, where there seemed to be no personal educative motive that could account for it, no sense of punishment which could be meant to improve the sufferer, he would fall back on the thought that each man is not isolated or solitary, but that there is some essential unity that binds humanity together, and that suffering at one point must, in some mysterious way that he cannot understand, mean amelioration at another. To feel this would require the exercise of faith, because no human



ingenuity could grasp the method by which such a system could be applied. But there would be no choice between believing this, or deciding that whatever the essential nature of the Mind of God was, it was not based on human ideas of justice and benevolence.

The theory of religion would then be that the crude idea of propitiatory and conciliatory sacrifice would fall to the ground ; that to use the inspired words of the old Roman poet—

*Aptissima quæque dabunt Di.  
Carior est illis homo quam sibi ;*

and that the only sacrifices required of man would be, on the one hand, the sacrifice of selfish desires, evil tendencies, sinful appetites ; and on the other hand the voluntary abnegation of comfortable and desirable things, in the presence of a noble aim, a great idea, a generous purpose.

Religion would then become a purely subjective thing ; an intense desire to put the human will in harmony with the Divine will, a hopeful, generous, and trustful attitude of soul, a determination to receive suffering and pain as a gift from the Father, as bravely and sincerely as the gifts of happiness and joy, with a fervent faith that God did indeed, by implanting in men so ardent a longing for strength and joy, and so deeply rooted a terror of pain and weakness, imply that He intended joy, of a purified and elevated kind, to be the ultimate inheritance of His creatures ; and the sacrifice of man would then be the willing resignation of everything which could in any degree thwart the ultimate purpose of God.

That I believe from the depths of my heart to be the meaning of the Christian revelation ; and I should look upon the thought of objective sacrifice as being an unworthy survival from a time when men had little true knowledge of the Fatherly Heart of God.

And thus, to my mind, the only possible theory of worship is that it is a deliberate act, an opening of the door that leads to the Heavenly presence. Any influence is religious which fills the mind with gratitude and peace, which makes a man humble and patient and wise, which teaches him that the only happiness possible is to attune and harmonise his mind with the gracious purpose of God.

And so religion and worship grow to have a larger and wider significance ; for though the solemnities of religion are one of the doors through which the soul can approach God, yet what is known

as religious worship is only as it were a postern by the side of the great portals of beauty and nobility and truth. One whose heart is filled with a yearning mystery at the sight of the starry heavens, who can adore the splendour of noble actions, courageous deeds, patient affections, who can see and love the beauty so abundantly shed abroad in the world, who can be thrilled with ecstasy and joy by art and music, he can at all these moments draw near to God, and open his soul to the influx of the divine spirit.

Religion can only be of avail so long as it takes account of all the avenues by which the soul can reach the central presence; and the error into which professional ecclesiastics fall is the error of the scribes and Pharisees, who said that thus and thus only, by these rites and sacrifices and ceremonies, shall the soul have access to the Father of all living. It is as false a doctrine as would be the claim of scientific men or artists, if they maintained that only through science or only through art should men draw near to God. For all the intuitions by which men can perceive the Father are sacred, are religious. And no one may perversely bind that which is free, or make unclean that which is pure, without suffering the doom of those who would delude humanity into worshipping an idol of man's devising, rather than the Spirit of God Himself.

Now the question must be asked, how are those who are Christians indeed, who adore in the inmost shrine of their spirit the true Christ, who believe that the Star of the East still shines in unveiled splendour over the place where the young Child is, how are they to be true to their Lord? Are they to protest against the tyranny of intellect, of authority, of worldliness, over the Gospel? I would say that they have no need thus to protest. I would say that, if they are true to the spirit of Christ, they have no concern with revolutionary ideals at all; Christ's own example teaches us to leave all that on one side, to conform to worldly institutions, to accept the framework of society. The tyranny of which I have spoken is not to be directly attacked. The true concern of the believer is to be his own attitude to life, his relations with the circle, small or great, in which he finds himself. He knows that if indeed the spirit of Christ could truly leaven the world, the pomps, the glories, the splendours which veil it would melt like unsubstantial wreaths of smoke. He need not trouble himself about traditional ordinances, elaborate ceremonials, subtle doctrines, metaphysical definitions. He must concern himself with far different things. Let him be sure that no sin is allowed to lurk unresisted

in the depths of his spirit; let him be sure that he is patient, and just, and tender-hearted, and sincere; let him try to remedy true affliction, not the affliction which falls upon men through their desire to conform to the elaborate usage of society, but the affliction which seems to be bound up with God's own world. Let him be quiet and peaceable; let him take freely the comfort of the holy influences which Churches, for all their complex fabric of traditions and ceremony, still hold out to the spirit; let him drink freely from all sources of beauty, both natural and human; the Churches themselves have gained, by age, and gentle associations, and artistic perception, a large treasure of things that are full of beauty—architecture and music and ceremony—that are only hurtful when held to be special and peculiar channels of holiness and sweetness, when they are supposed to have definite sanctification which is opposed to the sanctification of the beauty exterior to them. Let the Christian be grateful for the beauty they hold, and use it freely and simply. Only let him beware of thinking that what is the open inheritance of the world is in the possession of any one smaller circle. Let him not even seek to go outside of the persuasion, as it is so strangely called, in which he was born. Christ spoke little of sects, and the fusion of sects, because He contemplated no Church in the sense in which it is now too often used, but a unity of feeling which should overspread the earth. The true Christian will recognise his brethren not necessarily in the Church or sect to which he belongs, but in all who live humbly, purely, and lovingly, in dependence on the Great Father of all living.

For after all, disguise it from ourselves as we will, we are all girt about with dark mysteries into which we have to look whether we dare or not. We fill our life as full as we can of occupation and amusements, of warmth and comfort; yet sometimes, as we sit in our peaceful room, the gust pipes thin and shrill round the corners of the court, the rain rustles in the tree; we drop the book which we hold, and wonder what manner of things we indeed are, and what we shall be. Perhaps one of our companions is struck down, and goes without a word or sign on his last journey; or some heavy calamity, some loss, some bereavement hangs over our lives, and we enter into the shadow; or some inexplicable or hopeless suffering involves one whom we love, from which the only deliverance is death; and we realise that there is no explanation, no consolation possible. In such moments we tend to think that the

world is a very terrible place, and that we pay a heavy price for our share in it. How unsubstantial then appear our hopes and dreams, our little ambitions, our paltry joys! In such a mood we feel that the most definite creed illumines, as it were, but a tiny streak of the shadowy orb; and we are visited, too, by the fear that the more definite the creed, the more certain it is that it is only a desperate human attempt to state a mystery which cannot be stated, in a world where all is dark.

In such a despairing mood, we can but resign ourselves to the awful will of God, Who sets us here, we know not why, and hurries us hence, we know not whither. Yet the very sternness and inexorability of that dread purpose has something that sustains and invigorates. We look back upon our life, and feel that it has all followed a plan and a design, and that the worst evils we have had to bear have been our faithless terrors about what should be; and then we feel the strength that ebbed from us drawing back to sustain us; we recognise that our present sufferings have never been unbearable; that there has always been some residue of hope; we read of how brave men have borne intolerable calamities, and have smiled in the midst of them, at the reflection that they have never been so hard as they anticipated; and then we are happy if we can determine that whatever comes we will try to do our best, in our small sphere, to live as truly and purely as we can, to practise courage and sincerity, to help our fellow-sufferers along, to guard innocence, to guide faltering feet, to encourage all the sweet and wholesome joys of life, to be loving, tender-hearted, generous, to lift up our hearts; not to be downcast and resentful because we do not understand everything at once, but humbly and gratefully to read the scroll as it is unrolled.

The night grows late. I rise to close my outer door to shut myself out from the world; I shall have no more visitors now. The moonlight lies cold and clear on the little court; the shadow of the cloister pillars lies black on the pavement. Outside, the town lies hushed in sleep; I see the gables and chimneys of the clustered houses stand in a quiet dream over the old ivy-covered wall. The college is absolutely still, though one or two lights still burn in studious rooms, and peep through curtained chinks. What a beautiful place to live one's life in, a place which greets one with delicate associations, venerable beauty at every turn! The moonlight falls through the tall oriel of the Hall, and the armorial shields

burn and glow with rich points of colour. I pace to and fro, wondering, musing. All here seems so permanent, so still, so secure, and yet we are spinning and whirling through space to some unknown goal. What are the thoughts of the mighty unresting Heart, to whose vastness and agelessness the whole mass of these flying and glowing suns is but as a handful of dust that a boy flings upon the air? How has He set me here, a tiny moving atom, yet more sure of my own minute identity than I am of all the vast panorama of things which lie outside of me? Has He indeed a tender and a patient thought of me, the frail creature whom He has moulded and made? I do not doubt it; I look up among the star-sown spaces, and the old aspiration rises in my heart, 'Oh, that I knew where I might find Him! that I might come even into His presence!' How would I go, like a tired and sorrowful child to his father's knee, to be comforted and encouraged, in perfect trust and love, to be raised in his arms, to be held to his heart; he would but look in my face, and I should understand without a question, without a word.

Now in its mouldering turret the old clock wakes and stirs, moves its jarring wires, and the soft bell strikes midnight. Another of my few short days gone, another step nearer to the unseen. Slowly but not sadly I return; for I have been for a moment nearer God; the very thought that rises in my mind, and turns my heart to His, comes from Him. He would make all plain, if He could; He gives us what we need; and when we at last awake we shall be satisfied.

CHIPPINGE.<sup>1</sup>

BY STANLEY J. WEYMAN.

## CHAPTER X.

## THE QUEEN'S SQUARE ACADEMY FOR YOUNG LADIES.

MISS SIBSON sat in state in her parlour in Queen's Square. Rather more dignified of mien than usual, and more highly powdered of nose, she was dividing her attention between the culprit in the corner, the elms outside—between which fledgeling rooks were making adventurous voyages—and the longcloth which she was preparing for the young ladies' plain-sewing; for in those days plain-sewing was still taught in the most select academies. Nor, while the schoolmistress was thus engaged in providing for the domestic training of her charges, was she without assurance that their minds were under care. The double doors which separated the schoolroom from the parlour were ajar, and through the aperture one shrill voice after another could be heard, raised in monotonous perusal of Mrs. Chapone's 'Letters to a Young Lady upon the Improvement of the Mind.'

Miss Sibson wore her best dress, of black silk, secured half-way down the bodice by the large cameo brooch. But neither this nor the reading in the next room could divert her attention from her duties.

'The tongue,' she enunciated with great clearness, as she raised the longcloth in both hands and carefully inspected it over her glasses, 'is an unruly member. Ill-nature,' she continued, slowly meting off a portion, and measuring a second portion against it, 'is the fruit of a bad heart. Our opinions of others'—this with a stern look at Miss Hilhouse, fourteen years old, and in disgrace—'are the reflections of ourselves.'

The young lady, who was paying with the backboard for a too ready wit, put out the unruly member, and, narrowly escaping detection, looked inconceivably sullen.

<sup>1</sup> Copyright, 1906, by Stanley J. Weyman, in the United States of America.

'The face is the mirror to the mind,' Miss Sibson continued thoughtfully, as she threaded a needle against the light. 'I hope, Miss Hilhouse, that you are now sorry for your fault.'

Miss Hilhouse maintained a stolid silence. Her shoulders ached, but she was proud.

'Very good,' said Miss Sibson placidly; 'very good! With time comes reflection.'

Time, a mere minute, brought more than reflection. A gentleman walked quickly across the forecourt to the door, the knocker fell sharply, and Miss Hilhouse's sullenness dropped from her. She looked first uncomfortable, then alarmed. 'Please, may I go now?' she muttered.

Wise Miss Sibson paid no heed. 'A gentleman?' she said to the maid who had entered. 'Will I see him? Procure his name.'

'Oh, Miss Sibson,' came from the corner in an agonised whisper, 'please may I go?' Fourteen standing on a stool with a back-board could not bear to be seen by the other sex.

Miss Sibson looked grave. 'Are you sincerely sorry for your fault?' she asked.

'Yes.'

'And will you apologise to Miss Smith for your—your gross rudeness?'

'Ye-es.'

'Then go and do so,' Miss Sibson replied; 'and close the doors after you.'

The girl fled. And simultaneously Miss Sibson rose, with a mixture of dignity and blandness, to receive Arthur Vaughan. The schoolmistress of that day who had not manner at command had nothing; for deportment ranked among the essentials. And she was quite at her ease. The same could not be said of the gentleman. But that his pride still smarted, but that the outrage of yesterday was fresh, but that he drew a savage satisfaction from the prospect of the apologies he was here to receive, he had not come. Even so, he had told himself more than once that he was a fool to come; a fool to set foot in the house. He was almost sure that he had done more wisely had he burned the letter in which the schoolmistress informed him that she had an explanation to offer—and so had made an end.

Now, if in place of meeting him with humble apologies, this confounded woman were going to bear herself as if no amends were due, he had indeed made a mistake.



Yet her manner said almost as much as that. 'Pray be seated, sir,' she said; and she indicated a chair.

He sat down stiffly, and glowered at her. 'I received your note,' he said.

She smoothed her ample lap, and looked at him more graciously. 'Yes,' she said, 'I was relieved to find that the unfortunate occurrence of yesterday was open to another explanation.'

'I have yet,' he said grimly, 'to hear the explanation.' Confound the woman's impudence!

'Exactly,' she said slowly. 'Exactly. Well, it turns out that the parcel you left behind you when you'—for an instant a smile broke the rubicund placidity of her face—'when you retired so hurriedly contained a pelisse.'

'Indeed?' he said dryly.

'Yes; and a letter.'

'Oh?'

'Yes; a letter from a lady who has for some years taken an interest in Miss Smith. The pelisse proved to be a gift from her.'

'Then I fail to see——'

'Exactly,' Miss Sibson interposed blandly, indeed too blandly. 'You fail to see why you came to be selected as the bearer? So do I. Perhaps you can explain that.'

'No,' he answered curtly. 'Nor is that my affair. What I fail to see, madam, is why Miss Smith did not at once suspect that the present came from the lady in question.'

'Because,' Miss Sibson replied, 'the lady was not known to be in this part of England; and because you, sir, maintained that Miss Smith had left the parcel in the coach.'

'I maintained what I was told.'

'But it was not the fact. However, let that pass.'

'No,' Vaughan retorted, with some warmth. 'For it seems to me, madam, very extraordinary that in a matter which was capable of so simple an explanation you should have elected to insult a stranger—a stranger who——'

'Who was performing no more than an office of civility, you would say?'

'Precisely.'

'Well—yes.' Miss Sibson spoke slowly, and was silent for a moment after she had spoken. Then, somewhat abruptly, 'You are an usher, I think,' she said, 'at Mr. Bengough's?'

Vaughan almost jumped in his chair. 'I, madam?' he cried. Certainly not!'

'Not at Mr. Bengough's?'

'Certainly not!' he repeated, with indignation. Was the woman mad? An usher? Good heavens!

'I know your name,' she said slowly. 'But——'

'I came from London the day before yesterday. I am staying at the White Lion, and I am late of the 14th Dragoons.'

She raised her eyebrows. 'Oh, indeed,' she said. 'Is that so? Well,' rubbing a little of the powder from her nose with a needle-case, and looking at him very shrewdly, 'I think,' she continued, 'that that is the answer to your question.'

Vaughan stared. 'I do not understand you,' he said.

'Then I must speak more plainly. Were you an usher at Mr. Bengough's, your civility—civility I think you called it?—to my assistant had passed very well, Mr. Vaughan. But the civility of a gentleman, late of the 14th Dragoons, fresh from London, and staying at the White Lion, to a young person in Miss Smith's position, is apt, as in this case—eh?—to lead to misconstruction.'

'You do me an injustice!' he said, reddening to the roots of his hair.

'Possibly, possibly,' Miss Sibson said. And then, without warning, she gave way to a fit of silent laughter, which caused her portly form to shake like a jelly. It was a habit with her, attributed by some to her private view of Mrs. Chapone's famous letters on the improvement of the mind; by others, to that knowledge of the tricks and turns of her sex with which thirty years of schoolkeeping had endowed her.

No doubt the face of rueful resentment with which Arthur Vaughan regarded her did not shorten the fit. But at last, 'Young gentleman,' she said, 'you don't deceive me! You did not come here to-day merely to hear an old woman make an apology.'

He tried to maintain an attitude of dignified surprise. But her jolly laugh, her shrewd red face, were too much for him. His eyes fell. 'Upon my honour,' he said, 'I meant nothing.'

She shook with fresh laughter. 'It is just of that I complain, sir,' she said.

'You can trust me.'

'I can trust Miss Smith,' she retorted, shaking her head. 'Her I know, though our acquaintance is of the shortest. Still, I know

her from top to toe. You, young gentleman, I don't know. Mind,' she continued, with good nature, 'I don't say that you meant any harm when you came to-day. But I'll wager you thought that you'd see her.'

Vaughan laughed out frankly. Her humour had conquered him. 'Well,' he said audaciously, 'and am I not to see her?'

Miss Sibson looked at him, and rubbed a little more powder from her nose. 'Umph!' she said doubtfully. 'If I knew you I'd know what to say to that. A pretty girl, eh?' she added, with her head on one side.

He smiled.

'And a good one! And if you were the usher at Mr. Bengough's I'd ask no more, but I'd send for her. But——'

She stopped. Vaughan said nothing, but, a little out of countenance, looked at the floor.

'Just so, just so,' Miss Sibson said, as quietly as if he had answered her. 'Well, I am afraid I must not send for her.'

He looked at the carpet. 'I have seen so little of her,' he said.

'And I daresay you are a man of property?'

'I am independent.'

'Well, well, there it is.' Miss Sibson smoothed out the lap of her silk dress.

'I do not think,' he said, in some embarrassment, 'that five minutes' talk would hurt her.'

'Umph!'

He laughed—an awkward laugh. 'Come, Miss Sibson,' he said. 'Let us have the five minutes, and let us both have the chance.'

She looked out of the window, and rubbed her glasses reflectively. 'Well,' she said at length, as if she had not quite made up her mind, 'I will be quite frank with you, Mr. Vaughan. I did not intend to be so, but you have met me half-way, and I believe you to be a gentleman. The truth is, I should not have gone as far with you as I have unless'—she looked at him suddenly—'I had had a character of you.'

'Of me?' he cried in astonishment.

'Yes.'

'From Miss Smith?'

Miss Sibson smiled at his simplicity. 'Oh, no,' she said; 'you are going to see the character.' And with that the school-mistress drew from her workbox a small slip of paper, which she

unfolded and gave to him. 'It is from the lady,' she said, 'who made use of you yesterday.'

He took it in much astonishment. On the inner side of the paper, which was faintly scented, he read a dozen words in a fine handwriting:

'Mary Smith, from her fairy godmother. The bearer may be trusted.'

Vaughan stared at the paper in undiminished surprise. 'I don't understand,' he said. 'Who is the lady, and what does she know of me?'

'I cannot tell you, nor can Miss Smith,' Miss Sibson replied, 'who, indeed, has seen her only twice or thrice at long intervals, and has not heard her name. But Miss Smith's education—she has never known her parents—was defrayed, I presume, by this godmother. And once a year Miss Smith has been in the habit of receiving a gift, of some value to a young person in her position, accompanied by a few words in that handwriting.'

Vaughan stared. 'And,' he said, 'you draw the inference that—that—'

'I draw no inference,' Miss Sibson replied dryly, 'save that I have authority from—shall I say her godmother—to trust you farther than I should have trusted you. That is the only inference I draw. But I have one thing to add,' she continued. 'Miss Smith did not enter my employment in an ordinary way. My late assistant left me abruptly. While I was at a loss an attorney of character in this city called on me and said that a client desired to place a young person in safe hands; that she was a trained teacher, and must live by teaching, but that care was necessary, since she was very young, and had more than her share of good looks. He hinted, Mr. Vaughan, at the inference which you, I believe, have already drawn. And—and that is all.'

Vaughan looked thoughtfully at the carpet.

Miss Sibson waited awhile. At last: 'The point is,' she said shrewdly, 'do you still wish to have the five minutes?'

Arthur Vaughan hesitated. He knew that he ought, that it was his duty, to say 'No.' But something in the woman's humorous eye challenged him, and recklessly—for the gratification of a moment—he said: 'Yes, if you please, I will see her.'

'Very good, very good,' Miss Sibson answered slowly. She had not been blind to the momentary hesitation. 'Then I will

send her to you to make her apologies. Only be kind enough to remember that she does not know that you have seen that slip of paper.'

He assented, and with a good-natured nod Miss Sibson rose and went heavily from the room. Not for nothing was she held in Bristol a woman of sagacity beyond the ordinary, whose game of whist it was a pleasure to watch; nor without reason had that attorney of character, of whom we have heard, chosen her in *custodiam puellæ*.

Vaughan waited, and, to be frank, his heart beat more quickly than usual. He knew that he was doing a foolish thing, though he had refused to commit himself; and an unworthy thing, though Miss Sibson, perhaps for her own reasons, had winked at it. He knew that he had no right to see the girl if he did not mean her well; and how could he mean her well when he had no intention of marrying her? For, for a man with his career in prospect to marry a girl in her position—to say nothing of the stigma which no doubt lay upon her birth—was a folly of which none but boys and old men were capable.

He listened, ill at ease, already repenting. The voices in the next room, reduced to a faint murmur by the closed doors, ceased. She was being told. She was being sent to him. He coloured. Yes, he was ashamed of himself. He rose and went to the window, and wished that he had said 'No'; that he had taken himself off. What was he doing here at his time of life—the most sane and best balanced time of life—in this girls' school? It was unworthy of him.

The door opened, and he forgot his unworthiness, he forgot all. The abnormal attraction, allurements, charm, call it what you will, which had overcome him when she turned her eyes on him on the coach overcame him again—and tenfold. He thought that it must lie in her eyes, gentle as a dove's. And yet he did not know. He had not seen her indoors before, and her hair gathered in a knot at the back of her head was a Greek surprise to him; while her blushes, the quivering of her mouth, her figure slender but full of grace, and high-girdled after the mode of the day—all, all were so perfect, so enticing, that he knew not where the magic lay.

But magic there was. And such magic that though he had prepared himself, and though the last thing in his thoughts was to insult her, he forgot himself. As she paused, her hand still

resting on the door, her face downcast and distressed, 'Good G-d,' he cried, 'how beautiful you are!'

And she saw that he meant no insult, that the words burst from him spontaneously. But not the less for that was their effect on her. She turned white, her very heart seeming to stop, she appeared to be about to swoon. While he, forgetting all but her shrinking beauty, devoured her with his eyes.

Until he remembered himself. Then he turned from her to the window. 'Forgive me!' he cried. 'I did not know what I said. You came on me so suddenly; you looked so beautiful——'

He stopped; he could not go on.

And she was trembling from head to foot; but she made an effort to escape back to the commonplace. 'I came,' she murmured—it was clear that she hardly knew what she was saying—'Miss Sibson told me to come to say that I—I was sorry, sir, that I—I misjudged you yesterday.'

'Yesterday? Yesterday?' he cried, almost angrily. 'Bah, it is an age since yesterday!'

She could make no answer to that, though she knew well what he meant. If she answered him it was only by suffering him to gaze at her in an eloquent silence—a silence in which his eyes cried again and again, 'How beautiful you are!' While her eyes, downcast, under trembling lashes, her heart beaten down, defenceless, cried only for 'Quarter, quarter!'

They were yards apart. The table, and on it Miss Sibson's squat workbox and a pile of longcloth, was between them. Miss Sibson herself could have desired nothing more proper. And yet—

Farewell, farewell, my faithless shield;  
Thy lord at length is forced to yield.  
Vain, vain is every outward care;  
The foe's within and triumphs there!

It was all over. In her ears would ring for ever his words of worship—the cry of the man to the woman, 'How beautiful you are!' She would thrill with pleasure when she thought of them, and burn with shame, and never, never, never be the same again! And for him, with that cry forced from him, love had become present, palpable, real, and the idea of marriage real also; an idea to be withstood, to be combated, to be treated as foolish, Byronic, impossible. But an idea which would not leave him any more than the image of her gentle beauty, indelibly stamped on

his brain, would leave him. He might spend some days or some weeks in doubt and wretchedness. But from that moment the odds were against him—he was young, and passion had never had her way with him—as seriously against him as against the army that with spies and traitors in its midst moves against an united foe.

Not a word that was *covenant* had passed between them, though so much had passed, when a hasty footstep crossed the fore-court, and stopped at the door. The knocker fell sharply twice, and recalled them to realities.

‘I—I must go,’ she faltered, wresting herself from the spell of his eyes. ‘I have said what I—I hope you understand, and I—it is time I went.’ How her heart was beating!

‘Oh, no, no!’

‘Yes, I must go!’

Too late! A loud voice in the passage, a heavy step, announced a visitor. The door flew open, and there entered, pushing the startled maid aside, the Honourable Bob Flixton, at the height of his glory, loud, impudent, and unabashed.

‘Run to earth, my lad!’ he cried boisterously. ‘Run to earth! Run——’

He broke off, gaping, as his eyes fell upon poor Mary, who, in making way for him, had partly hidden herself behind the door. He whistled softly, in great amazement, and ‘Hope I don’t intrude,’ he continued. And he grinned; while Vaughan, looking blackest thunder at him, could find no words that were adequate. To think that this loud-voiced, confident fool, the Don Giovanni of the regiment, had stumbled on his pearl!

‘Well, well, well!’ the Honourable Bob resumed, casting down his eyes as if he were shocked. And again: ‘I hope I don’t intrude,’ he continued—it was the parrot cry of that year. ‘I didn’t know. I’ll take myself off again’—he whistled low—‘as fast as I can.’

But Vaughan felt that to let him go thus, to spread the tale with a thousand additions and innuendoes, was worst of all. ‘Wait, if you please,’ he said, with a note of sternness in his tone. ‘I am coming with you, Flixton. Good morning, Miss Smith.’

‘See here, won’t you introduce me?’ cried the irrepressible Bob.

‘No!’ Vaughan answered curtly, and without staying to reflect. ‘You will kindly tell Miss Sibson, Miss Smith, that I am



obliged, greatly obliged to her. Now come, Flixton! I have done my business, and we are not wanted here.'

'I come reluctantly,' said Bob, allowing himself to be dragged out, but not until he had cast a last languishing look at the beauty. And on the doorstep, 'Sly dog, sly dog!' he said. 'To think that in Bristol, where pretty girls are as scarce as mushrooms in March, there should be such an angel! Damme, an angel! And you the discoverer. It beats all!'

'Shut up,' Vaughan answered angrily. 'You know nothing about it!' And then, still more sourly, 'See here, Flixton, I take it ill of you following me here. It was too cool, I say.'

But the Honourable Bob was not quick to quarrel. 'I saw you go in, dear chap,' he cried heartily. 'I wanted to tell you that the hour of dinner was changed. See? Did my own errand, and coming back thought I'd—truth was, I fancied you'd some little game on hand.'

'Nothing of the kind!'

The Honourable Bob stopped. 'Honour bright? Honour bright?' he repeated eagerly. 'Mean to say, Vaughan, you're not on the track of that little filly?'

Vaughan scowled. 'Not in the way you mean,' he said sternly. 'You make a mistake. She's a good girl.'

Flixton winked. 'Heard that before, my lad,' he said, 'more than once. From my grandmother. I'll take my chance of that.'

Vaughan in his heart would have been glad to fall upon him and pommel him. But there were objections to that course. On the other hand, his feelings had cooled in the last few minutes, and he was far from prepared to announce off-hand that he was going to marry the beauty. So 'No, you will not, Flixton,' he said. 'Let it go! Do you hear? The fact is,' he continued, in some embarrassment, 'I'm in a sort of fiduciary relation to the young lady, and—and I am not going to see her played with. That's the fact.'

'Fiduciary relation?' the Honourable Bob retorted, in perplexity. 'What the deuce is that? Never heard of it! D'you mean, man, that you are—eh?—related to her? Of course, if so—'

'No, I am not related to her.'

'Then—'

'But I'm not going to see her made a fool of, that's all!'

An idea struck the Honourable Bob. He stared. 'See here,'

he said in a tone of horror, 'you ain't—you ain't thinking of marrying her?'

Vaughan's cheeks burned. 'May be, and may be not,' he said curtly. 'Either way, it is my business!'

'But surely you're not? Man alive!'

'It is my business, I say!'

'Of course, of course, if it is as bad as that,' Flixton answered with a grin. 'But—hope I don't intrude, Vaughan, but ain't you making a bit of a fool of yourself? What'll old Vermuyden say, eh?'

'That's my business!' Vaughan answered haughtily.

'Just so, just so; and quite enough for me. All I say is, if you are not in earnest yourself, don't play the dog in the manger!'

## CHAPTER XI.

DON GIOVANNI FLIXTON.

IN the political world the last week of April and the first week of May of that year were fraught with surprises. It is probable that they saw more astonished people than are to be found in England in an ordinary twelvemonth. The party which had monopolised power for half a century, and to that end and the advancement of themselves, their influence, their friends, and their dependants, had spent the public money, strained the law, and supported the mob, were incredibly, nay, were bitterly surprised when they saw all these engines turned against them; when they found dependants falling off and friends growing cold; above all, when they found that rabble, which they had so often directed, aiming its yells and brickbats against their windows.

But it is unlikely that any Tory of them all was more surprised by the change in the political aspect than Arthur Vaughan, when he came to think of it, by the position in which he had placed himself. Certainly no step that he had taken was irrevocable. He had said nothing positive; his honour was not engaged. But he had said a good deal. On the spur of the moment, moved by the strange attraction which the girl had for him, he had spoken after a fashion which only farther speech could justify. And then, not content with that, as if fortune were determined to make sport of his discretion, he had been led by another impulse—call it generosity, call it jealousy, call it what you will—to say more to Bob Flixton than he had said to her.

He had done this, who had hitherto held himself a little above the common run of men. Who had chalked out his career and never doubted that he had the strength to follow it. Who had not been content to wait, idle and dissipated, for a dead man's shoes, but in the pride of a mind which he believed to be the master of his passions had set his face towards the high prizes of the senate and the forum. He, who if he could not be Fox, would be Erskine. Who would be anything, in a word, except the empty-headed man of pleasure, or the plain dullard satisfied to sit in a corner with a little.

He, who had planned such a future, now found himself on the brink—ay, on the very point—of committing as foolish an act as the most thoughtless could commit. He was proposing to marry a girl below him in station, still farther below him in birth, whom he had only known three days, whom he had only seen three times ! And all because she had beautiful eyes, and looked at him—Heavens, how she had looked at him !

He went hot as he pictured her with her melting eyes, hanging towards him a little as the ivy inclines to the oak. And then he turned cold. And cold, he considered what he was going to do !

Of course he was not going to marry her.

No doubt he had said to her more than he had the right to say. But his honour was not engaged. The girl was not the worse for him ; even if that which he had read in her eyes were true, she would get over it as quickly as he would. But marry her, give way to a feeling doubtless evanescent, let himself be swayed by a fancy at which he would laugh a year later—no ! No ! He was not so weak. He had not only his career to think of, but the family honours which would be his one day. What would old Vermuyden say if he impaled a baton sinister with the family arms, added a Smith to the family alliances, married the nameless, penniless teacher in a girls' school ?

No, of course, he was not going to marry her. He had said what he had said to the Honourable Bob merely to shield her from a Don Juan. He had not meant it. He would go for a long fatiguing walk and put the notion and the girl out of his head, and come back cured of his folly, and make a merry night of it with the old set. And to-morrow—no, the morrow was Sunday—on Monday he would return to London and to all the chances which the changing political situation must open to an ambitious man. He regretted that he had not taken the Chancellor's hint and sought for a seat in the House.

But a solitary ramble in the valley of the Avon, which was a hundred-fold more beautiful in those days than in these, because less spoiled by the hand of man; a ramble by the Logwood Mills, with their clear-running weedy stream, by King's Weston and Leigh Woods—such a ramble, tuneful with the songs of birds and laden with the scents of spring, may not be the surest cure for that passion, which

is not to be reasoned down or lost  
In high ambition or a thirst for greatness!

At any rate he returned uncured, and for the first part of the Honourable Bob's dinner was wildly merry. After that, and suddenly, he fell into a moody silence which his host was not the last to note.

Fortunately with the removal of the cloth and the first brisk journey of the decanters came news. A waiter brought it. Hart Davies, the Tory candidate for Bristol, and for twenty years its popular member, had withdrawn, seeing his chance hopeless. The retirement was unexpected, and it caused so much surprise that the party could think of nothing else. Nine-tenths of those present were Tories, and Flixton proposed that they should sally forth, and vent their feelings by smashing the windows of the Bush, the Radical headquarters; a feat performed many a time before with no worse consequences than a broken head or two. But Colonel Brereton set his foot sharply on the proposal.

'I'll put you under arrest if you do,' he said. 'I'm senior officer of the district, and I'll not have it, Flixton! Do you think that this is the time, you madmen,' he continued, looking round the table and speaking with indignation, 'to provoke the rabble, and get the throats of half Bristol cut?'

'Oh, come, Colonel, it is not as bad as that!' Flixton remonstrated.

'You don't know how bad it is!' Brereton answered, his brooding eyes kindling. And he developed anew his fixed idea that the forces of disorder, once provoked, were irresistible; that the country was at their mercy, and that only by humouring them, a course suggested also by humanity, could the storm be weathered.

The company consisted for the most part of reckless young subalterns flushed with wine. They listened out of respect to his rank, but they winked and grinned behind his back; until, half

conscious of ridicule, he grew angry. On ordinary occasions Flixton would have been the worst offender. But he had the grace to remember that the Colonel was his guest, and he sought to turn the subject.

'Come, come!' he cried, hammering the table and pushing the bottle. 'Let the Colonel alone. For Heaven's sake shelve the cursed Bill! I'm sick of it! It's the death of all fun and jollity. I'll give you a sentiment. "The Fair when they are Kind, and the Kind when they are Fair." Fill up! Fill up all, and drink it!'

They echoed the toast in various tones, sober or fuddled. And some began to grow excited. A glass was shattered and flung noisily into the fire. A new one was called for, also noisily.

'Now, Bill,' Flixton continued to his right-hand neighbour, 'it's your turn! Give us something spicy!' And he hammered the table. 'Captain Codrington's sentiment.'

'Let's have a minute!' pleaded the gentleman assailed.

'Not a minute,' boisterously. 'See, the table's waiting for you! Captain Codrington's sentiment!'

Men of small genius kept a written list, and committed some lines to memory before dinner. The Captain was one of these. But the call on him was sudden, and he sought, with an agonised mind, for one which would seem in the least degree novel. At last, with a sigh of relief, '*Maids and Missuses!*' he cried.

'Ay, ay, Maids and Missuses!' the Honourable Bob echoed, raising his glass. 'And especially,' he whispered, calling his neighbour's attention to Vaughan by a shove, 'School-missuses! School-missuses, my lad! Here, Vaughan,' he continued aloud, 'you must drink this, and no heeltaps!'

Vaughan caught his name and awoke from a reverie. 'Very good,' he said, raising his glass. 'What is it?'

'Maids and Missuses!' the Honourable Bob replied, with a wink at his neighbour. And then, incited by the fumes of the wine he had taken, he rose to his feet and raised his glass. 'Gentlemen,' he said, 'Gentlemen!'

'Silence,' they cried. 'Silence! Silence for Bob's speech.'

'Gentlemen,' he resumed, a spark of malice in his eyes, 'I've a piece of news to give you! It's news that—that's been mightily kept by a gentleman here present. Devilish close he's kept it, I'll say that for him! But he's a neat hand that can bamboozle Bob Flixton, and I've run him to earth, run him to earth this morning and got it out of him.'

‘Hear! Hear! Bob! Go on, Bob; what is it?’ from the company.

‘You are going to hear, my Trojans! And no flam! Gentlemen, charge your glasses! I’ve the honour to inform you that our old friend and tip-topper, Arthur Vaughan, otherwise the Counsellor, has got himself regularly put up, knocked down, and sold to as pretty a piece of the feminine as you’ll see in a twelvemonth! Prettiest in Bristol, ‘pon honour,’ with feeling, ‘be the other who she may! Regular case of—’ and in irresistibly comic accents, with his head and glass alike tilted, he trolled:

“There first for thee my passion grew,  
Sweet, sweet Matilda Pottingen;  
Thou wast the daughter of my tu-  
tor, law professor at the U-  
niversity of Göttingen!  
-niversity of Göttingen!”

Don’t laugh, gentlemen! It’s so! He’s entered on the way-bill, booked through to matrimony, and—the Honourable Bob was undoubtedly a little tipsy—and it only remains for us to give him a good send-off. So charge your glasses, and——

Brereton laid his hand on his arm. He was sober and he did not like the look of Vaughan’s disgusted face. ‘One moment, Flixton,’ he said, ‘is this true, Mr. Vaughan?’

Vaughan’s brow was as black as thunder. He had never dreamt that, drunk or sober, Flixton would be guilty of such a breach of confidence. He hesitated. Then, ‘No!’ he said.

‘It’s not true?’ Codrington struck in. ‘You are not going to be married, old chap?’

‘No!’

‘But, man,’ Flixton hiccupped, ‘you told me so—or something like it—only this morning.’

‘You either misunderstood me,’ Vaughan answered, in a tone so distinct as to be menacing, ‘for you have said far more than I said. Or, if you prefer it, I’ve changed my mind. In either case it is my business! And I’ll trouble you to leave it alone!’

‘Oh, if you put it—that way, old chap?’

‘I do put it that way!’

‘And any way,’ Brereton said, interposing hurriedly, ‘this is no time for marrying! I’ve told you boys before, and I tell you again——’

And he plunged into a fresh argument on the old point. Two

or three joined issue, grinning. And Vaughan, as soon as attention was diverted from him, slipped away.

He was horribly disgusted, and sunk very low in his own eyes. He loathed what he had done. He had not, indeed, been false to the girl, for he had given her no promise. He had not denied her, for her name had not been mentioned. And he had not gone back on his resolution, for he had never formed one seriously. Yet in a degree he had done all these things. He had played a shabby part by himself and by the girl. He had been meanly ashamed of her. And though his conduct had followed the lines which he had marked out for himself, he hoped that he might never again feel so unhappy, and so poor a thing, as he felt as he walked the streets and cursed his discretion.

Discretion! Cowardice was the right name for it. Because the girl, the most beautiful, pure, and gentle creature on whom his eyes had ever rested, was called Mary Smith, and taught in a school, he disavowed her and turned his back on her.

He did not know that he was suffering what a man, whose mind has so far governed his heart, must suffer when the latter rebels. In planning his life he had ignored his heart; now he must pay the penalty. He went to bed at last, but not to sleep. Instead he lived the scene over and over again, now wondering what he ought to have done; now brooding on what Flixton must think of him; now on what she, whose nature, he was sure, was as perfect as her face, would think of him, if she knew. How she would despise him!

The next day was Sunday, and he spent it, in accordance with a previous promise, with Brereton, at his pleasant home at Newchurch, a mile from the city. Though the most recent of his Bristol acquaintances, Brereton was the most congenial; and a dozen times Vaughan was on the point of confiding his trouble to him. He was deterred by the melancholy cast of Brereton's character, which gave promise of no decisive advice. And early in the evening he took leave of his host and strolled towards the Downs, balancing *I would* against *I will not*; now facing the bleak of a prudent decision, now thrilling with foolish rapture, as he pondered another event. Lord Eldon had married young and with as little prudence; it had not impeded his rise, nor Erskine's. Doubtless Sir Robert Vermuyden would say that he had disgraced himself; but he cared little for that. What he had to combat was the more personal pride of the man who, holding



himself a little wiser than his fellows, cannot bear to do a thing that in the eyes of the foolish may set him below them !

Of course he came to no decision ; though he wandered on Brandon Hill until the Float at his feet ceased to mirror the lights, and Bristol lay dark below him. And Monday found him still hesitating. Thrice he started to take his place on the coach. And thrice he turned back, hating himself for his weakness. If he could not overcome a foolish fancy, how could he hope to scale the heights of the Western Circuit, or hurl Coleridge and Follett from their pride of place ? Or, still harder task, how would he dare to confront in the House the cold eye of Croker or of Goulburn ? No, he could not hope to do either. He had been wrong in his estimate of himself. He was a poor creature, unable to hold his own amongst his fellows, impotent to guide his own life !

He was still contesting the matter when, a little before noon, he espied Flixton in the act of threading his way through the busy crowd of Broad Street. The Honourable Bob was wearing hessians, and a high-collared green riding-coat, with an orange vest and a soft many-folded cravat. In fine, he was so smart that suspicion entered Vaughan's head ; and on its heels—jealousy.

In a twinkling he was on Flixton's track. Broad Street, the heart of Bristol, was thronged, for Hart Davies's withdrawal was in the air and an election crowd was abroad. Newsboys with their sheets, tipsy ward-leaders, and gossiping merchants jostled one another. The beau's green coat, however, shone conspicuous,

Glorious was his course,  
And long the track of light he left behind him !

and before Vaughan had asked himself if he were justified in following, pursued and pursuer were over Bristol Bridge, and making, by way of the Welsh Back—a maze of coal-hoys and dangling cranes—for Queen's Square.

Vaughan doubted no longer, weighed the propriety of his course no longer. For a cool-headed man of the world, who asked nothing better than to master a silly fancy, he was foolishly perturbed. He made on with a grim face ; but a dray loading at a Newport coal-hulk drew across his path, and Flixton was pacing under the pleasant elms and amid the groups that loitered up and down the sunlit Square, before Vaughan came within hail, and called him by name.

Flixton turned then, saw who it was, and grinned—nothing

abashed. 'Well,' he said, tipping his hat a little to one side, 'well, old chap! Are you let out of school too?'

Vaughan had already discovered Mary Smith and her little troop under the trees in the farthest corner. But he tried to smile—and did so, a little awry. 'This is not fair play, Flixton,' he said.

'That is just what I think it is,' the Honourable Bob answered cheerfully. 'Eh, old chap? Neat trick of yours the other day, but not neat enough! Thought to bamboozle me and win a clear field! Neat! But no go, I found you out, and now it is my turn. That's what I call fair play.'

'Look here, Flixton,' Vaughan replied—he was fast losing his composure—'I'm not going to have it. That's plain.'

The Honourable Bob stared. 'Oh!' he answered. 'Let's understand one another. Are you going to marry the girl after all?'

'I've told you—'

'Oh, you've told me, yes, and you've told me, no. The question is, which is it?'

Vaughan controlled himself. He could see Mary out of the corner of his eye, and knew that she had not yet taken the alarm. But the least violence might attract her attention. 'Whichever it be,' he said firmly, 'is no business of yours.'

'If you claim the girl—'

'I do not claim her, Flixton. I have told you that. But—'

'But you mean to play the dog in the manger?'

'I mean to see,' Vaughan replied sternly, 'that you don't do her any harm.'

Flixton hesitated. Secretly he held Vaughan in respect; and he would have postponed his visit to Queen's Square had he foreseen that that gentleman would detect him. But to retreat now was another matter. The duel was still in vogue; barely two years before the Prime Minister had gone out with a brother peer in Battersea Fields; barely twenty years before one Cabinet Minister had shot another on Wimbledon Common. He could not, therefore, afford to show the white feather, and though he hesitated, it was not for long. 'You mean to see to that, do you?' he retorted.

'I do.'

'Then come and see,' he returned flippantly. 'I'm going to have a chat with the young lady now. That's not murder, I suppose?' And he turned on his heel and strolled across the turf towards the group of which Mary was the centre.

Vaughan followed with black looks; and when Mary Smith,

informed of their approach by one of the children, turned a startled face towards them, he was at Flixton's shoulder, and pressing before him.

But the Honourable Bob had the largest share of presence of mind, and he was the first to speak. 'Miss Smith,' he said, raising his hat with *aplomb*, 'I—you remember me, I am sure?'

Vaughan pushed before him; and before the girl could speak—for jealousy is a fine spoiler of manners, 'This gentleman,' he said, 'wishes to see—'

'To see'—said Flixton with a lower bow.

'Miss Sibson!' Vaughan exclaimed.

The children stared; gazing up into the men's faces with the undisguised curiosity of childhood. Fortunately the Mary Smith who had to confront the two was no longer the Mary Smith whom Vaughan's appearance had stricken with panic three days before. For one thing she knew Miss Sibson better, and feared her less. For another, her fairy godmother—the gleam of whose gifts never failed to leave a hope of change, a prospect of something other than the plodding, endless round—had shown a fresh sign. And last, not least, a more potent fairy, a fairy whose wand had power to turn Miss Sibson's house into a Palace Beautiful, and Queen's Square, with its cawing rooks and ordered elms, into an enchanted forest, had visited her. True, Vaughan had left her abruptly to cool her burning cheeks and still her heart as she best might! But he had said what she would never forget, and though he had left her doubting, he had left her loving. And so the Mary who found herself addressed by two gallants was much less abashed than she who on Friday had had to do with one.

Still she was astonished by the manner in which they accosted her; and she showed this, modestly and quietly. 'If you wish to see Miss Sibson,' she said—instinctively she looked at Vaughan's companion—'I will send for her.' And she was in the act of turning, with comparative ease, to despatch one of the children on the errand, when the Honourable Bob interposed.

'But we don't want Miss Sibson—now,' he said. 'A man may change his mind as well as a woman! Eh, old chap?' turning to his friend with simulated good-humour. 'I'm sure you will say so, Miss Smith.'

She wondered what their odd mannner to one another meant. And, to add to her dignity, she laid her hand on the shoulder of one of her charges and drew her closer.

'Moreover, I'm sure,' Flixton continued—for Vaughan after

his first hasty intervention, stood sulkily silent—‘I’m sure Mr. Vaughan will agree with me——’

‘I?’

‘Oh, yes, he will, Miss Smith, because he is the most changeable of men himself! A weathercock, upon my honour!’ And he pointed to the tower of St. Mary, which, from the high ground of Redcliffe Parade on the farther side of the water, looks down on the Square. ‘Never of the same mind two days together!’

Vaughan snubbed him savagely. ‘Be good enough to leave me out!’ he said.

‘There!’ the Honourable Bob answered, laughing, ‘he wants to stop my mouth! But I’m not to be stopped. Of all men he’s the least right to say that I mustn’t change my mind. Why, if you’ll believe me, Miss Smith, no farther back than Saturday morning he was all for being married! ’Pon honour! Went away from here talking of nothing else! In the evening he was just as dead the other way! Nothing was farther from his thoughts. Shuddered at the very idea! Come, old chap, don’t look fierce!’ And he grinned at Vaughan. ‘You can’t deny it!’

Vaughan could have struck him; the trick was so neat and so malicious. Fortunately a man who had approached the group touched Vaughan’s elbow at this critical moment, and diverted his wrath. ‘Express for you, sir,’ he said. ‘Come by chaise, been looking for you everywhere, sir!’

Vaughan smothered the execration which rose to his lips, snatched the letter from the man, and waved him aside. Then, swelling with rage, he turned upon Flixton. But before he could speak the matter was taken out of his hands.

‘Children,’ said Mary Smith in a clear, steady voice, ‘it is time we went in. The hour is up, collect your hoops. I think,’ she continued, looking coldly at the Honourable Bob, ‘you have addressed me under a misapprehension, sir, intending to address yourself to Miss Sibson. Good-morning! Good-morning!’ with a slight and significant bow which included both gentlemen. And taking a child by either hand, she turned her back on them, and with her little flock clustering about her, and her pretty head held high, she went slowly across the road to the school. Her lips were quivering, but the men could not see that. And her heart was bursting, but only she knew that.

Without that knowledge Vaughan was furiously angry. It was not only that the other had got the better of him by a sly trick; but he was conscious that he had shown himself at his worst—

stupid when tongue-tied, and rude when he spoke. Still, he controlled himself until Mary was out of earshot, and then he turned upon Flixton.

'What right—what right,' he snarled, 'had you to say what I would do? And what I would not do? I consider your conduct——'

'Steady, man!' Flixton, who was much the cooler of the two, said. He was a little pale. 'Think before you speak. You would interfere. What did you expect? That I was going to play up to you?'

'I expected at least——'

'Ah, well, you can tell me another time what you expected, I have an engagement now and must be going,' the Honourable Bob said. 'See you again!' And with a cool nod he turned on his heel, and assured that, whatever came of the affair, he had had the best of that bout, he strode off.

Vaughan was only too well aware of the same fact; and but that he held himself in habitual control, he would have followed and struck his rival. As it was, he stood a moment looking blackly after him. Then, sobered somewhat, though still bitterly chagrined, he took his way towards his hotel, carrying in his oblivious hand the letter which had been given him. Once he halted, half-minded to return to Miss Sibson's and to see Mary and explain. He took, indeed, some steps in the backward direction. But he reflected that if he went he must speak, and plainly. And, angry as he was, furiously in love as he was, was he prepared to speak?

He was not prepared. And while he stood doubting between that eternal would and would not, his eyes fell on the letter in his hand.

## CHAPTER XII.

### A ROTTEN BOROUGH.

CHIPPINGE, Sir Robert Vermuyden's borough, was in no worse case than two-thirds of the small boroughs of that day. Still, of its great men Cowley might have written:

Nothing they but dust can show,  
Or bones that hasten to be so.

And of its greatness he might have said the same. The one and the other belonged to the past.

The town occupies a low, green hill, dividing two branches of the Avon which join their waters a furlong below. <sup>1</sup> Built on the

ridge and clinging to the slopes of this eminence the stone-tiled houses look pleasantly over the gentle undulations of the Wiltshire pastures—no pastures more green ; and at a distance are pleasantly seen from them. But viewed more closely—at the date of which we write—the picturesque in the scene became mean or incongruous. Of the Mitred Abbey that crowned the hill, and had once owned these fertile slopes, there remained but the maimed hulk, patched and botched, and long degraded to the uses of that parish church its neighbour, of which nothing but the steeple survived. The crown-shaped market cross, once a dream of beauty in stone, still stood, but battered and defaced ; while the Abbot's gateway, under which sovereigns had walked, was sunk to a vile lock-up, the due corrective of the tavern which stood cheek by jowl with it.

Still, to these relics, grouped as they were upon an open triangular green, the hub of the town, there clung in spite of all some shadow of greatness. The stranger whose eye fell on the doorway of the Abbey Church, with its whorls of sculptured images, gazed and gazed again with a sense of wondering awe. But let him turn his back on these buildings, and his eye met, in cramped street and blind alley, a lower depth. Everywhere were things once fine, sunk to base uses ; old stone mansions converted into tenements ; the solid houses of mediæval burghers into crazy taverns ; fretted cloisters into pigsties and hovels ; a Gothic arch propped the sagging flank of a lath-and-plaster stable. Or if anything of the beauty of a building survived it was masked by climbing penthouses ; or, like the White Lion, the old inn which had been the Abbot's guest-house, it was altered out of all likeness to its former self. For the England of '31, gross and matter-of-fact, was not awake to the value of those relics of a noble past which generations of intolerance had hurried to decay.

Doubtless in this mouldering, dusty shell was snug, warm living. Georgian comfort had outlived the wig and the laced coat, and though the influence of the Church was at its lowest ebb, and morals were not much higher, inns were plenty and flourished, and in the panelled parlours of the White Lion or the Heart and Hand was much good eating, followed by deep drinking. The London road no longer passed through the town ; the great fair had fallen into disuse. But the cloth trade, by which Chippinge had once thriven, had been revived, and the town was not quite fallen. Still, of all its former glories, it retained but one intact. It returned two members to Parliament. That which Birmingham and Sheffield had not, this little borough of eighteen hundred souls

enjoyed. Fallen in all other points, it retained, or rather its High Steward, Sir Robert Vermuyden, retained, the right of returning, by the votes of its Alderman and twelve capital burgesses, two members to the Commons' House.

And Sir Robert could not by any stretch of fancy bring himself to believe that the town would willingly part with this privilege. Why should it strip itself? he argued. It enjoyed the honour vicariously indeed. But did he not year by year pay the Alderman and eight of the capital burgesses thirty pounds apiece for their interest, a sum which quickly filtered through their pockets and enriched the town, besides taking several of the voters off the rates? Did he not also at election times set the taps running and distribute a moderate largesse among the commonalty, and—and in fact do everything which it behoved a liberal and enlightened patron to do? Nay, had he not, since his accession, raised the status of the voters, long and vulgarly known as 'The Cripples,' so that they, who in his father's time had been, almost without exception, drunken illiterates, were now, to the extent of at least one half, men of respectable position?

No, Sir Robert wholly declined to believe that Chippinge had any wish for a change so adverse to its interests. The most he would admit was that there might be some slight disaffection in the place, due to that confounded Bowood, which was for ever sapping and mining and seeking to rob its neighbours.

But even he was presently to be convinced that there was a very odd spirit abroad in this year '31. The new police and the new steam railways, and this cholera of which people were beginning to talk, were not the only new things. There were new ideas in the air; and the birds seemed to carry them. They took possession not only of the troublesome and discontented—poachers whom Sir Robert had gaoled, or the sons of men whom his father had pressed—but of the most unlikely people. Backs that had never been aught but pliant grew stiff. Men who had put up with the old system for more years than they could remember grew restive. Others, who had all their lives stood by while their inferiors ruled the roost, discovered that they had rights. Nay—and this was the strangest thing of all—some who had thriven by the old management and could not hope to gain by a change revolted, after the fashion of Dyas the butcher, and proved the mastery of mind over matter. Not many, indeed, these; martyrs for ideas are rare. But their action went for much, and when later the great mass of the voteless began to move, there were rats in plenty of



the kind that desert sinking ships. By that time he was a bold man who in tavern or workshop spoke for the rule of the few, to which Sir Robert fondly believed his borough to be loyal.

His agent had never shared that belief, fortunately for him; or he had had a rude awakening on the first Monday in May. It was customary for the Vermuyden interest to meet the candidates on the Chippenham road, half an hour before the dinner hour, and to attend them in procession through the town to the White Lion. Often this was all that the commonalty saw of an election, and a little horseplay was both expected and allowed. In old days, when the 'Cripples' had belonged to the very lowest class, their grotesque appearance in the van of the gentlemanly interest had given rise to many a home-jest. The crowd would follow them jeering and laughing, and there would be some pushing, and a drunken man or two would fall. But all had passed in good humour; the taps had been running in one interest, the ale was Sir Robert's, and the crowd envied while they laughed.

White, as he stood on the bridge reviewing the first comers, wished he might have no worse to expect to-day. But he did not hope as much. The town was crowded, and the streets down to the bridge were so cumbered with moving groups that it was plain the procession would have to push its way. For certain, too, many of the people did not belong to Chippinge. With the town-folk White knew he could deal. He did not believe that there was a Chippinge man who, eye to eye with him, would cast a stone. But here were yokels from Calne and Bowood, who knew not Sir Robert; with Bristol lambs and men as dangerous, and not a few Radicals from a distance, rabid with zeal and overflowing with promises. Made up of such elements the crowd hooted from time to time, and there was a threat in the sound that filled White with misgivings.

Nor was this the worst. The cloth factory stood close to the bridge. The procession must pass it. And the hands employed in it, hostile to a man, were gathered before the doorway, in their aprons and paper caps, waiting to give the show a reception. They had much to say already, their jeers and taunts filling the air; but White had a shrewd suspicion that they had worse missiles in their pockets.

Still, he had secured the attendance of a score of sturdy fellows, sons of Sir Robert's farmers, and these, with a proportion of the tagrag and bobtail of the town, gave a fairly solid aspect to his party. Nor was the jeering all on one side, though that deep and

unpleasant groaning which now and again rolled down the street was wholly Whiggish.

Alas, it was when the agent came to analyse his men that he had most need of the smile that deceives. True, the rector was there and the curate of Eastport, and the clerk and the sexton—the two last-named were voters. And there were also four or five squires arrayed in support of the gentlemanly interest, and as many young bucks come to see the fun. Then there were three other voters: the Alderman, who was a small grocer, and Annibal the basket-maker—these two were stalwarts—and Dewell the barber, also staunch, but a timid man. There was no Dyas, however, Sir Robert's burliest supporter in old days, and his absence was marked. Nor any Thrush the pig-killer—the jaws of a Radical gaol held him. Nor, last and heaviest blow of all—for it had fallen without warning—was there any Pillinger of the Blue Duck. Pillinger, his wife said, was ill. What was worse he was in the hands of a Radical doctor capable, the agent believed, of hocussing him until the polling was over. The truth about Pillinger—whether he lay ill or whether he lay shamming, whether he was at the mercy of the apothecary or under the thumb of his wife—White could not learn. He hoped to learn it before it was too late. But for the present Pillinger was not here.

The Alderman, Annibal, Dewell, the clerk, the sexton, and Arthur Vaughan. White totted them up again and again and made them six. The Bowood voters he made five—four stalwarts and Dyas the butcher.

Certainly he might still poll Pillinger. But, on the other hand, Mr. Vaughan might arrive too late. White had written to his address in town, and receiving no answer had sent an express to Bristol on the chance that the young gentleman tarried there. Probably he would be in time. But when things are so very close—and when there are alarm and defeat in the air—men grow nervous. White smiled as he chatted with the pompous rector and the country squires, but he was very anxious. He thought of old Sir Robert at Stapylton, and he sweated at the notion of defeat. Cobbett had reached his mind, but Sir Robert had his heart!

'Boo!' moaned the crowd higher up the street. The sound sank and the harsh voice of a speaker came fitfully over the heads of the people.

'Who's that?' asked old Squire Rowley, one of the country gentlemen.

'Some spouter from Bristol, sir, I fancy,' the agent replied contemptuously. And with his eye he whipped in a couple of hobbledehoyes who seemed inclined to stray towards the enemy.

'I suppose,' the Squire continued, lowering his voice, 'you can depend on your men, White?'

'Oh, lord, yes, sir,' White answered; like a good election agent he took no one into his confidence. 'We've enough here to do the trick. Besides, young Mr. Vaughan will be here to-morrow, and the landlord of the Blue Duck, who is not well enough to walk to-day, will poll. He'd break his heart, bless you,' White continued, with a brow of brass, 'if he could not vote for Sir Robert!'

'Seven to five.'

'Seven to four, sir.'

'But Dyas, I hear, the d——d rogue, will vote against you?'

White winked. 'Bad,' he said cryptically, 'but not as bad as that, sir.'

'Oh! oh!' quoth the other, nodding, 'I see.' And then, glancing at the gang before the cloth works, whose taunts and cries of 'Flunkies!' and 'Sell your birthright, will you?' were constant and vicious, 'You've no fear there'll be violence, White?' he asked.

'Lord, no, sir,' White answered; 'you know what election rows are, all bark and no bite!'

'Still I hear that at Bath, where I'm told Lord Brecknock stands a poor chance, they are afraid of a riot.'

'Ay, ay, sir,' White answered indifferently, 'this isn't Bath.'

'Precisely,' the rector struck in, in pompous tones. 'I should like to see anything of that kind here! They would soon,' he continued with an air, 'find that I am not on the commission of the peace for nothing! I shall make, and I am sure you will make,' he went on, turning to his brother justice, 'very short work of them! I should like to see anything of that kind tried here!'

White nodded, but in his heart he thought that his reverence was likely to have his wish gratified. However, no more was said, for the approach of the Stapylton carriages, with their postillions, outriders and favours, was signalled by persons who had been placed to watch for them, and the party on the bridge, falling into violent commotion, raised their flags and banners and hastened to form an escort on either side of the roadway. As the gaily-decked carriages halted on the crest of the bridge, loud greetings were exchanged. The five voters took up a position of honour, seats in the carriages were found for three or four of the more important gentry, and seven or eight others got to horse. Meanwhile those

of the smaller folk, who thought that they had a claim to the recognition of the candidates, were gratified, and stood back blushing, or being disappointed stood back glowering; all this amid confusion and cheering on the bridge and shrill jeers on the part of the cloth hands. Then the flags were waved aloft, the band of five, of which the drummer could truly say '*Pars magna fui*,' struck up '*See the Conquering Hero comes!*' and White stood back for a last look.

Then, '*Shout, lads, shout!*' he cried, waving his hat. '*Don't let 'em have it all their own way!*' And with a roar of defiance, not quite so loud or full as the gentlemanly interest had raised of old, the procession got under way, and, led by a banner bearing '*Our Ancient Constitution!*' in blue letters on a red ground, swayed spasmodically up the street. The candidates for the suffrages of the electors of Chippinge had passed the threshold of the borough. '*Hurrah! Yah! Hurrah! Yah! Yah! Yah!* Down with the Borough-mongers. *Our Ancient Constitution! Hurrah! Boo! Boo!*'

White had his eye on the clothmen, and under its spell they did not go beyond hooting and an egg or two, spared from the polling day, and flung at long range when the Tories had passed. No one was struck, and the carriages moved onward, more or less triumphantly. Serjeant Wathen who was in the first, and whose sharp black eyes moved hither and thither in search of friends, rose repeatedly to bow. But Mr. Cooke, who did not forget that he was paying two thousand five hundred pounds for his seat and thought that it should be a soft one, scarcely deigned to move. For as the procession advanced into the town the clamour of the crowd which lined the narrow High Street and continually shouted '*The Bill! The Bill!*' drowned the utmost efforts of Sir Robert's friends, and left no doubt of the popular feeling.

There was some good-humoured pushing and thrusting, the drum beating and the church bells jangling bravely above the hubbub. And once or twice the rabble came near to cutting the procession in two. But there was no real attempt at mischief, and all went well until the foremost carriage was abreast of the Cross, which stands at the head of the High Street, where the latter debouches into the space before the Abbey.

Then some foolish person gave the word to halt before Dyas the butcher's. And a voice—it was not White's—cried, '*Three groans for the Radical Rat! Rat! Rat!*'

The groans were given before the crowd fully understood

their meaning or the motive for the stoppage. The drummer beat out something which he meant for the Rogues' March, and an unseen hand raising a large dead rat, tied to a stick, waved it before the butcher's first-floor windows.

The effect was surprising—to old-fashioned folk. In a twinkling, with a shout of 'Down with the Borough-mongers!' a gang of white-aproned clothmen rushed the rear of the procession, drove it in upon the main body, and amid screams and uproar forced the whole line out of the narrow street into the space before the Abbey. Fortunately the White Lion, which faced the Abbey, stood only a score of paces to the left of the Cross, and the carriages were able to reach it; but in disorder, pressed on by such a fighting, swaying, shouting crowd as Chippinge had not seen for many a year.

It was no time to stand on dignity. The candidates tumbled out as best they could, their chief supporters followed them, and while half a dozen single combats proceeded at their elbows, they hastened across the pavement into the house. The rector alone disdained to flee. Once on the threshold of the inn he turned and raised his hat above his head.

'Order!' he cried, 'Order! Do you hear me!'

But 'Yah! Borough-monger!' the rabble answered, and before he could say more a young farmer was hurled against him, and a whip, of which a postillion had just been despoiled, whizzed past his head. He, too, turned tail at that, with his face a shade paler than usual; and with his retreat resistance ceased. The carriages were hustled somehow and anyhow into the yard, and there the greater part of the procession also took refuge. A few, sad to say, sneaked off and got rid of their badges, and a few more escaped through a neighbouring alley. No one was much hurt; a few black eyes were the worst of the mischief, nor could it be said that any vindictive feeling was shown. But the town was swept clear, and the victory of the Radicals was complete. Left in possession of the open space before the Abbey, they paraded for some time under the windows of the White Lion, waving a captured flag, and cheering and groaning by turns.

Meantime in the hall of the inn the grandees were smoothing their ruffled plumes, in a state of mind in which it was hard to say whether indignation or astonishment had larger place. Oaths flew thick as hail, unrebuked by the Church, the most outspoken perhaps being the landlord, who met them with a pale face.

'Good lord, good lord, gentlemen!' he said, 'What violence!

What violence! What are we coming to next? What's took the people, gentlemen? Isn't Sir Robert here?' For to this simple person it seemed impossible that people should behave badly in that presence.

'No, he's not!' Mr. Cooke answered with choler. 'I'd like to know why he's not! I wish to Heaven'—only he did not say 'Heaven'—'that he were here, and he'd see what sort of thing he has let us into!'

'Ah, well, ah, well!' returned the more discreet and philosophic Serjeant, 'shouting breaks no bones. We are all here, I hope? And after all, this shows up the Bill in a pretty strong light, eh, rector? If it is to be carried by methods such as these—these'—

'D—d barefaced intimidation!' Squire Rowley growled.

'Or if it is to give votes to such persons as these——'

'D—d Jacobins! Republicans every one!' interposed the Squire.

'It will soon be plain to all,' the Serjeant concluded, in his House of Commons manner, 'that it is a most revolutionary, dangerous, and—and unconstitutional measure, gentlemen.'

'By G—d!' Mr. Cooke cried—he was thinking that if this was the kind of thing he was to suffer he might as well have fought Taunton or Preston, or any other open borough, and kept his money in his pocket—'By G—d, I wish Lord John were stifled in the mud he's stirred up, and Gaffer Grey with him!'

'You can add Bruffam, if you like,' Wathen answered good-humouredly—he was not paying two thousand five hundred pounds for his seat. 'And rid me of a rival and the country of a pest, Cooke! But come, gentlemen, now we're here and no bones broken shall we sit down? We are all safe, I trust, Mr. White? And especially—my future constituents?' with a glance of his shrewd Jewish-looking eyes.

'Yes, sir, no harm done,' White replied as cheerfully as he could; which was not over cheerfully, for in all his experience of Chippinge he had known nothing like this; and he was a trifle scared. 'Yes, sir,' he continued, looking round, 'all here, I think! And—and by Jove,' in a tone of relief, 'one more than I expected! Mr. Vaughan! I am glad, sir, very glad, sir,' he added heartily, 'to see you. Very glad!'

The young man who had alighted from his postchaise a few minutes before did not, in appearance at least, reciprocate the feeling. He looked sulky and bored. But he shook the outstretched hand;

he could do no less. Then, saying scarcely a word, he stood back again. He had hastened to Chippinge on receiving White's belated express, but rather because, irritated by the collision with Flixton, he welcomed any change, than because he was sure what he would do. In the chaise he had thought more of Mary than of politics, more of the Honourable Bob than of his cousin. And though, as far as Sir Robert was concerned, he was resolved to be frank and to play the man, his mind had travelled no farther.

Now, thrown suddenly among these people, he was, in a churlish way, taken somewhat aback. But, in a thoroughly bad temper, he told himself that it did not matter. If they did not like the line he was going to take, that was their business. He was not responsible to them. In fine, he was in a savage mood, with half his mind here and the other half dwelling on the events of the morning. For the moment politics seemed to him a poor game, and what he did or did not do of little consequence !

White and the others were not blind to his manner, and might have resented it in another. But Sir Robert's heir was a great man and had a right to moods if any man had ; doubtless he was become a fine gentleman and thought it a nuisance to vote in his own borough. They were all politeness to him, therefore, and while his eyes passed haughtily beyond them, seeking Sir Robert, they presented to him those whom he did not know.

'Very kind of you to come, Mr. Vaughan,' said the Serjeant, who, like many browbeaters, could be a sycophant at need. 'Very kind indeed ! I don't know whether you know Mr. Cooke ? He, equally with me, is obliged to you for your attendance.'

'Greatly obliged, sir,' Mr. Cooke muttered. 'Certainly, certainly.'

Vaughan bowed coldly. 'Is not Sir Robert here ?' he asked. He was still looking beyond those to whom he spoke.

'No, Mr. Vaughan.'

And then, 'This way to dinner,' White cried loudly. 'Come, gentlemen ! Dinner, gentlemen, dinner !'

And Vaughan, heedless what he did or where he dined, but inclined in a sardonic way to amuse himself, went in with them. What did it matter ? He was not going to vote for them. But that was his business, and Sir Robert's. He was not responsible to them.

Certainly he was in a very bad temper.

*(To be continued.)*



